

fornia  
nal  
ty

WFUL DISCLOSURES

MARIA MONK



LIBRARY  
UNIVERSITY OF  
CALIFORNIA  
SAN DIEGO

AWFUL DISCLOSURES  
OF  
*MARIA MONK*  
AS EXHIBITED IN A  
NARRATIVE OF HER SUFFERINGS  
DURING A RESIDENCE OF FIVE YEARS  
AS A NOVICE, AND TWO YEARS AS A  
BLACK NUN, IN THE HOTEL DIEU  
NUNNERY AT MONTREAL

"Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not of her plagues."—Rev. xviii. 4.

LONDON:  
PUBLISHED FOR THE TRADE

*Made and Printed in  
Great Britain by  
Truslove & Bray, Ltd.,  
West Norwood, S.E. 27.*

## PREFACE.

---

IT is hoped that the reader of the ensuing narrative will not suppose that it is a fiction, or that the scenes and persons that I have delineated, had not a real existence. It is also desired that the author of this volume may be regarded not as a voluntary participant in the very guilty transactions which are described ; but receive sympathy for the trials which she has endured, and the peculiar situation in which her past experience, and escape from the power of the Superior of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery, at Montreal, and the snares of the Roman Priests in Canada, have left her.

My feelings are frequently distressed and agitated by the recollection of what I have passed through, and by night and day I have little peace of mind, and few periods of calm and pleasing recollection. Futurity also appears uncertain. I know not what reception this little work may meet with, and what will be the effect of its publication here or in Canada, among strangers, friends, or enemies. I have given the world the truth, so far as I have gone, on subjects of which I am told they are generally ignorant ; and I feel perfect confidence that any facts which may be discovered will confirm my words whenever they can be obtained. Whoever shall explore the Hotel Dieu Nunnery at Montreal, will find unquestionable evidence that the descriptions of the interior of that edifice, given in this book, were furnished by one familiar with them ; for whatever alterations may be attempted, there are

changes which no mason or carpenter can make and effectually conceal ; and therefore there must be plentiful evidence in that Institution, of the truth of my description.

There are living witnesses, also, who ought to be made to speak, without fear of penances, tortures, and death, and possibly their testimony at some future time may be added, to confirm my statements. There are witnesses I would greatly rejoice to see at liberty ; or rather there *were*. Are they living now ? or will they be permitted to live after the Priests and Superiors have seen this book ? Perhaps the wretched nuns in the cells have already suffered for my sake—perhaps Jane Ray has been silenced for ever, or will be murdered, before she has time to add her most important testimony to mine.

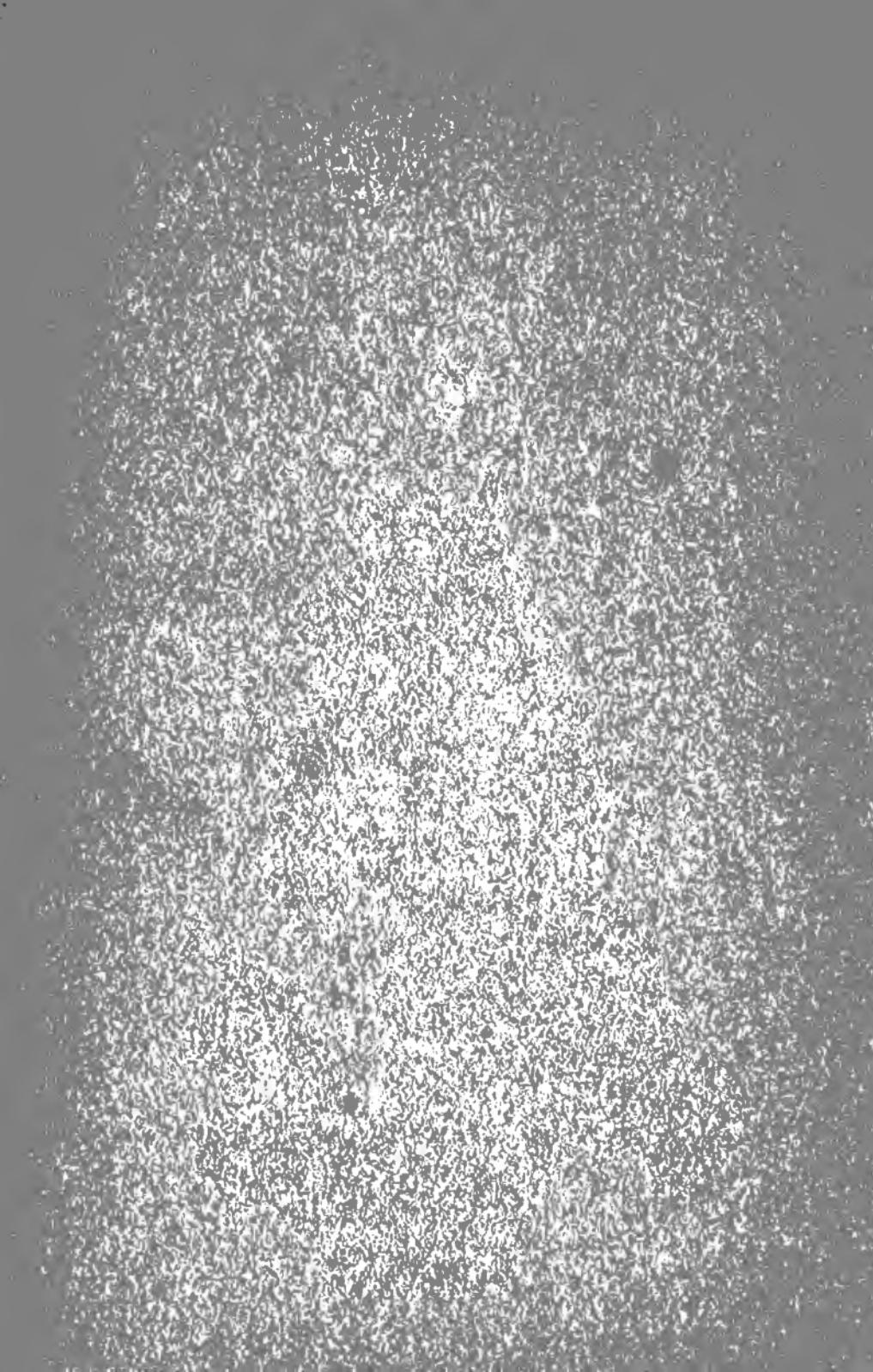
But speedy death in relation only to this world can be no great calamity to those who lead the life of a nun. The mere recollection of it always makes me miserable. It would distress the reader, should I repeat the dreams with which I am often terrified at night ; for I sometimes fancy myself pursued by my worst enemies ; frequently I seem as if again shut up in the Convent ; often I imagine myself present at the repetition of the worst scenes that I have hinted at or described. Sometimes I stand by the secret place of interment in the cellar ; sometimes I think I can hear the shrieks of the helpless females in the hands of atrocious men ; and sometimes almost seem actually to look again upon the calm and placid features of St. Frances, as she appeared when surrounded by her murderers.

I cannot banish the scenes and character of this book from my memory. To me it can never appear like an amusing fable, or lose its interest and importance. The story is one which is continually before me, and must return fresh to my mind, with painful emotions, as long as I live. With time, and Christian instruction, and the sympathy and examples of the wise and good,

I hope to learn submissively to bear whatever trials are appointed me, and to improve under them all.

Impressed as I continually am with the frightful reality of the painful communications that I have made in this volume, I can only offer to all persons who may doubt or disbelieve my statements, these two things :

Permit me to go through the Hotel Dieu Nunnery, at Montreal, with some impartial ladies and gentlemen, that they may compare my account with the interior parts of the building, into which no persons but the Roman Bishop and Priests are ever admitted ; and if they do not find my description true, then discard me as an impostor. Bring me before a court of justice—there I am willing to meet Latargue, Dufresne, Phelan, Bonin, and Richards, and their wicked companions, with the Superior, and any of the nuns, before a thousand men.



# MARIA MONK.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### EARLY RECOLLECTIONS.

MY parents were both from Scotland, but had been resident in Lower Canada some time before their marriage, which took place in Montreal, and in that city I spent most of my life. I was born at St. John's, where they lived for a short time. My father was an officer under the British Government, and my mother has enjoyed a pension on that account ever since his death.

According to my earliest recollections, he was attentive to his family, and often repeated to us a passage from the Bible which often occurred to me in after life. I may probably have been taught by him ; but after his death I do not recollect to have received any instruction at home, and was not even brought up to read the Scriptures ; my mother although nominally a Protestant, did not pay attention to her children. She was inclined to think well of the Catholics, and often attended their churches. To my want of religious instruction at home, and my ignorance of God and my duty, I can trace my introduction to convents, and the scenes I now describe.

When about six or seven years of age, I went to school to a Mr. Workman, a Protestant, who

taught in Sacrement reet, and remained several months. There I learnt to read and write, and arithmetic as far as division. All the progress I ever made in those branches was in that school, as I have never improved in any of them since.

A number of girls of my acquaintance went to school to the nuns of the Congregational Nunnery, or Sisters of Charity. The schools taught by them are perhaps more numerous than my readers may imagine. Nuns are sent out from the convent to many of the towns and villages of Canada to teach small schools; and some of them as instructresses in different parts of the United States. When I was ten years old, my mother asked me one day if I should like to learn to read and write French, and I began to think seriously of attending the school in the Congregational Nunnery. I had already some knowledge of that language, sufficient to speak it a little, and my mother knew something of it.

I have a distinct recollection of my entrance into the Nunnery; the day was an important one in my life, and on it commenced my acquaintance with a convent. I was conducted by some young friends along Notre Dame street, till we reached the gate. Entering, we walked some distance along the side of a building towards a chapel, until we reached a door, stopped, and rung a bell. It was opened, and entering, we proceeded through a covered passage till we took a short turn to the left, and reached the door of the school room. On my entrance, the Superior met me, and told me that I must dip my fingers into the holy water at the door, cross myself and say a short prayer; and this she told me was always required of Protestant as well as Catholic children.

There were about fifty girls in the school, and the nuns professed to teach reading, writing arithmetic and geography. The methods, however, were very imperfect, and little attention was devoted to them, the time being engrossed with lessons in needle-work, which was performed with much skill. The nuns had

no very regular parts assigned them in the management of the schools. They were rather unpolished in their manners, often exclaiming, (that's a lie,) and "mon Dieu," (my God,) on the most trivial occasions. Their writing was poor, and they often put a capital letter in the middle of a word. The only book of geography which we studied, was a catechism of geography, from which we learnt by heart a few questions and answers. We were sometimes referred to a map, but it was only to point out Montreal or Quebec, or some other prominent name.

It may be necessary to mention, that there are three Convents in Montreal, founded on different plans, and governed by different rules. Their names are as follows:

1. The Congregational Nunnery. 2. The Black Nunnery, or Convent of Sister Bourgeoise. 3. The Grey Nunnery.

The first of these professes to be devoted entirely to the education of girls. but with the exception of needle-work, hardly anything is taught but prayer and catechism; the instruction in reading, writing, &c., amounting to very little and often to nothing. This Convent is adjacent to the Grey Nunnery, separated from it only by a wall. The second professes to be a charitable institution for the care of the sick, and the supply of bread and medicines to the poor; and something is done in charity, though but little compared with the size of the buildings, and the number of inmates.

The Grey Nunnery, situated in a distant part of the city, is a large edifice, containing departments for the care of insane persons and foundlings. With this I have less acquaintance than with the others. I have often seen two of the Grey nuns, and know their rules; they do not confine them always within their walls, like those of the Black-Nunnery. These two Convents have their common names (Black and Grey) from the color of the dresses worn by the

unfortunate inmates secluded there.

In these three Convents there are certain apartments into which strangers can gain admittance, but others from which they are always excluded. In all, large quantities of ornaments are made by the nuns, which are exposed for sale in the Ornamental Rooms, and afford large pecuniary receipts every year, which contribute much to their income. The nuns of these Convents are devoted to the charitable object appropriated to each, the labor of making different articles known to be manufactured by them, and the religious observances, which occupy much of their time. They are regarded with much respect by the people at large; and when a novice takes the veil, she is supposed to retire from the temptations and troubles of this world into a state of holy seclusion, where, by prayer, self-mortification and good deeds, she prepares herself for heaven. Sometimes the Superior of a Convent obtains the character of working miracles: and when she dies crowds throng the Convent, who think indulgences are to be derived from bits of her clothes and other things she has possessed; and many have sent articles to be touched by her bed or chair, in which virtue is thought to remain. I used to participate in such ideas, and looked upon a nun as the happiest of women, and a Convent as the most holy, and delightful abode. Pains were taken to impress such views upon me. Some of the priests of the Seminary often visited the congregational Nunnery, and catechised and talked on religion. The Superior of the Black Nunnery also came into the school, and enlarged on the advantage we enjoyed in having such teachers, and dropped something now and then relating to her own convent, calculated to make us entertain the highest ideas of it, and make us sometimes think of the possibility of getting into it.

Among the instructions given us by the priests, some of the most pointed were directed against the Protestant Bible. They often enlarged upon the evil

tendency of that book, and told us that but for it many a soul condemned to hell, and suffering eternal punishment might have been in happiness. They would not say anything in its favour; for that would be speaking against religion and against God. They warned us against its woe, and represented it as a thing very dangerous to our souls. In confirmation of this they would repeat some of the answers taught us at catechism; a few of which I will here give. We had little catechisms, put in our hands to study; but the priests soon began to teach us a new set of answers, which were not to be found in our books from some of which I received new ideas, and got, as I thought, important light on religious subjects, which confirmed me more in my belief in the Roman Catholic doctrines. Those questions and answers I can still recall with tolerable accuracy, and some of them I will add here. I never have read them as we were taught them only by word of mouth.

"Question. Why did not God make all the commandments?"—"Response. Because man is not strong enough to keep them."

And another; "Q. Porquoi l'homme ne lit pas l'Evangile?"—"R. Parce que l'esprit de l'homme est trop borne et trop faible pour comprendre qu'est ce que Dieu a ecrit."

"Q. Why are men not to read the New Testament?"—"R. Because the mind of man is too limited and weak to understand what God has written."

These questions and answers are not to be found in the catechisms in use in Montreal and other places where I have been, but all the children in the Congregational Nunnery were taught them, and many more not found in these books.

---

## CHAPTER II.

## CONGREGATIONAL NUNNERY

THERE was a girl thirteen years old whom I knew in the School, who resided in the neighbourhood of my mother, and with whom I had been familiar. She told me one day at school, of the conduct of a priest with her at confession, at which I was astonished. It was of so criminal and shameful a nature, I could hardly believe it, and yet I had so much confidence that she spoke the truth, that I could not discredit it.

She was partly persuaded by the priest to believe he could not sin, because he was a priest, and that anything he did to her would sanctify her; and yet she seemed somewhat doubtful how she should act. A priest, she had been told by him, is a holy man, and appointed to a holy office, and therefore what would be wicked in other men, could not be so in him. She told me she had informed her mother of it, who expressed no anger or disapprobation: but only enjoined it upon her not to speak of it; and remarked to her as priests were not like men, but holy and sent to instruct, and save us, whatever they did was right.

I afterwards confessed to the priest that I had heard the story and had a penance to perform for indulging a sinful curiosity in making inquiries; and the girl had another for communicating it. I afterwards learned that other children had been treated in the same manner, and also of similar proceedings.

Indeed it was not long before such language was used to me, and I well remember how my views of right and wrong were shaken by it.

Another girl at the school, from a place above Montreal, called the Lac, told me the following story

of what had occurred recently in that vicinity. A young squaw, called La Belle Marie, (pretty Mary,) had been seen going to confession at the house of the priest, who lived a little distance out of the village. La Belle Marie was afterwards missed, and her murdered body was found in the river. A knife was also found bearing the priest's name. Great indignation was excited among the Indians, and the priest immediately absconded, and was never heard of again. A note was found on his table addressed to him, telling him to fly, if he was guilty.

It was supposed that the priest was fearful that his conduct might be betrayed by this young female; and he undertook to clear himself by killing her.

These stories struck me with surprise at first, but I gradually began to feel differently, even supposing them true, and to look upon the priests as men incapable of sin; besides, when I first went to confession, which I did to Father Richards in the old French church, since then taken down, I heard nothing improper; and it was not until I had been several times that the priests became more and more bold, and were at length indecent in their questions, and even in their conduct when I confessed to them in the Sacristie. This subject, I believe, is not understood nor suspected among Protestants; and it is not my intention to speak of it very particularly, because it is impossible to do so without saying things both shameful and demoralizing.

I will only say here, that when quite a child, I heard from the mouths of the priests at confession, what I cannot repeat, with treatment corresponding; and several families in Canada have assured me that they have repeatedly, and indeed regularly, been required to answer the same and other like questions, many of which present to the mind deeds which the most iniquitous and corrupt heart could hardly invent.

There was a frequent change of teachers in the school of the Nunnery, and no regular system was

pursued in our instruction. There were many nuns who came and went while I was there, being frequently called in and out without any perceptible reason. They supply school teachers to many of the country towns, usually two to each of the towns with which I was acquainted, besides sending Sisters of Charity to many parts of the United States. Among those whom I saw most was Saint Patrick, an old woman for a nun, that is about forty, very ignorant and gross in her manners, with quite a beard on her face, and very cross and disagreeable. She was sometimes our teacher in sewing, and was appointed to keep order among us. We were allowed to enter only a few of the rooms in the Congregational Nunnery, although it was not considered one of the secluded Convents.

In the Black Nunnery, which is very near the Congregational, is an hospital for sick people from the city; and sometimes some of our boarders, such as were indisposed, were sent there to be cured. I was once taken ill, and sent there for a few days.

There were beds enough for a number more. A physician attended it, and a number of the veiled nuns of that Convent spent most of their time there.

These would also sometimes read lectures and repeat prayers to us.

After I had been in the Congregational Nunnery two years, I left it, and attended several schools a short time. But I soon became dissatisfied, having many severe trials to endure at home, which my feelings will not allow me to describe; and as my Catholic acquaintances had often spoken to me in favour of their faith, I was inclined to believe it although I knew little of any religion. If I had known anything of true religion I believe I should never have thought of being a nun.

## CHAPTER III.

## BLACK NUNNERY

AT length I determined to become a Black Nun, and called upon one of the oldest priests in the Seminary, to whom I made known my intention.

The old priest was Father Rocque. He is still alive. He was at that time the oldest priest in the Seminary, and carried the (Bon Dieu,) Good God, as the Sacramental wafer is called. When going to administer it in any country place, he used to ride with a man before him, who rang a bell as a signal. When the Canadians heard it, whose habitations he passed, they would prostrate themselves to the earth, worshipping it (the wafer) as God. He was a man of great age, and wore large curls, so that he somewhat resembled his predecessor, Father Roue. He was at that time at the head of the Seminary. This institution is a large edifice, situated near the Congregational and Black Nunneries, being on the east side of Notre Dame street. It is the rendezvous and centre of all the priests in the district of Montreal, and supplies all the country as far down as Three Rivers, which place, is under the charge of the Seminary of Quebec. About one hundred and fifty priests are connected with that at Montreal, as every small place has one priest, and larger ones have two.

Father Rocque promised to converse with the Superior of the Convent, and proposed my calling again in two weeks, at which time I visited the Seminary again, and was introduced to the Superior of the Black Nunnery. She told me she must make inquiries, before she could give me a decided answer, and proposed to me to take up my abode a few days

at the house of a French family in St. Lawrence suburbs. Here I remained a fortnight; during which time I formed acquaintance with the family, particularly with the mistress of the house, who was a devoted Papist, and had a high respect for the Superior.

On Saturday morning I called, and was admitted into the Black Nunnery as a novice, much to my satisfaction, for I had a high idea of life in a convent, secluded as I supposed the inmates to be, from the world and all its evil influences, and assured of everlasting happiness in heaven. The Superior received me and conducted me into a large room, where the novices, who are called in French, Postulantes, were assembled, and engaged in the occupation of sewing.

Here were about forty of them, and they were in groups in different parts of the room, near the windows: but in each group was one of the veiled nuns of the convent, whose abode was in the interior apartments, to which no novice was admitted. As we entered, the Superior informed them that a new novice had come, and desired any present who might have known me in the world to signify it.

Two Miss Feugnees, and a Miss Howard from Vermont, who had been my fellow-pupils in the Congregational Nunnery, immediately recognized me. I was then placed in one of the groups at a distance from them, and furnished by a nun, called Sainte Clotilde, with materials to make a purse, such as priests used to carry the consecrated wafer in, when they administer the sacrament to the sick. I well remember my feelings at that time, sitting among a number of strangers, and expecting with painful anxiety the arrival of the dinner-hour. Then, as I knew, ceremonies were to be performed, for which I was but ill prepared, as I had not yet heard the rules by which I was to be governed, and knew nothing of the forms to be repeated in the daily exercises, except the creed in Latin. This was during the time of recreation, as it is called. The only recreation there allowed, is that of the mind, and of this but

little. We were kept at work, and permitted to speak with each other only in the hearing of the old nuns. We proceeded to dinner in couples, and ate in silence while a lecture was read.

The novices had access to only eight of the apartments; and whatever else we wished to know, we could only conjecture. The sleeping room was in the second story, at the end of the western wing. The beds were placed in rows without curtains or anything else, to obstruct the view; and in one corner was a small room partitioned off, in which was the bed of the night-watch, that is, the old nun appointed to oversee us for the night. In each side of the partition were two holes, through which she could look upon us when she pleased. Her bed was a little raised above the others. There was a lamp hung in the middle of our chamber, which showed everything to her distinctly; and as she had no light in her room, we never could perceive whether she was awake or asleep. As we knew that the slightest deviation from the rules would expose us to her observation and that of our companions, in whom it was a virtue to betray one another's faults, as well as to confess our own, I felt myself under a continual exposure to suffer what I disliked, and had my mind occupied in thinking of what I was to do next, and what I must avoid.

I soon learned the rules and ceremonies we had to pass, which were many, and we had to be particular in their observance, we were employed in different kinds of work while I was a novice. The most beautiful specimen of the nun's manufacture which I saw, was a rich carpet made of fine worsted, which had been begun before my acquaintance with the Convent, and was finished while I was there. This was sent as a present to the King of England, as an expression of gratitude for the money annually received from the government. It was about forty yards in length, and very handsome. The Convent of the Grey nuns has also received funds from the govern-

ment, though on some account or other, they had not for several years.

I was sitting by a window at one time with a girl named Jane M'Coy, when one of the old nuns came up and spoke to us in tones of liveliness and kindness, which seemed strange in a place where everything appeared so cold and reserved. Some remarks which she made were intended to cheer and encourage me, and made me think she felt some interest in me. I do not recollect what she said, but I remember it gave me great pleasure. I also remember that her manners struck me singularly. She was rather old for a nun, probably thirty; her figure large, her face wrinkled, and her dress careless. She seemed also to be under less restraint than the others, and this I afterwards found was the case. She sometimes even set the rules at defiance. She would speak aloud when silence was required, and sometimes walk about when she ought to have kept her place; she would even say and do things to make us laugh, and, although often blamed for her conduct, had her offences frequently passed over, when others would have been punished with penances.

I learnt that this woman had always been singular. She never would consent to take a saint's name on receiving the veil, and had always been known by her own, which was Jane Ray. Her irregularities were found to be numerous, and penances were of so little use in governing her, that she was pitied by some, who thought her partially insane. She was commonly spoken of as mad Jane Ray; and when she committed a fault, it was often apologized for by the Superior or other nuns, on the ground that she did not know what she did.

The occupations of a novice in the Black Nunnery are not such as some may suppose. They are not employed in studying the higher branches of education, nor offered any advantages for storing their minds, or polishing their manners; they are not taught even reading, writing, or arithmetic; much

less any of the more advanced branches of knowledge. My time was chiefly employed, at first, in work and prayers. It is true, during the last year I studied a great deal, and was required to work but very little; but it was the study of prayers in French and Latin, which I had merely to commit to memory, to prepare for the easy repetition of them on my reception, and after I should be admitted as a nun.

Among the wonderful events which had happened, that of the sudden conversion of a gay young lady of the city into a nun, appeared to me one of the most remarkable. The story which I first heard while a novice, made a deep impression upon my mind. It was nearly as follows:

The daughter of a wealthy citizen of Montreal was passing the Church of Bon Secours one evening, on her way to a ball, when she was suddenly thrown down upon the steps or near the door, and received a severe shock. She was taken up, and removed first, I think, into the church, but soon into the Black Nunnery, which she soon determined to join as a nun; instead, however, of being required to pass through a long novitiate, (which usually occupies about two years and a half, and is abridged only where the character is peculiarly exemplary and devout,) she was permitted to take the veil without delay, being declared by God to a priest to be in a state of sanctity. The meaning of this expression is that she was a real saint, and already in a great measure raised above the world and its influences, and incapable of sinning; possessing the power of intercession, and a proper object to be addressed in prayer. This remarkable individual, I was further informed, was still in the Convent, though I never was allowed to see her; she did not mingle with the other nuns, either at work, worship or meals; for she had no need of food, and not only her soul, but her body, was in heaven a great part of her time. What added, if possible, to the reverence and mysterious awe with which I thought of her, was the fact I learned, that she had

no name. The titles used in speaking of her were, the holy saint, reverend mother, or saint bon pasteur, (the holy good shepherd.)

It is wonderful that we could have carried our reverence for the Superior so far as we did, although it was the direct tendency of many instructions and regulations, indeed of the whole system, to permit, even to foster, a superstitious regard for her. One of us was occasionally called into her room to cut her nails, or dress her hair; and we would often collect the clippings, and distribute them to each other, or preserve them with the utmost care. I once picked up all the stray hairs I could find after combing her head, bound them together, and kept them until she told me I was not worthy to possess things so sacred. Jane M'Coy and I were once sent to alter a dress for the Superior. I gathered up all the bits of thread, made a little bag, and put them into it for safe preservation. This I wore a long time around my neck, so long, that I wore out a number of strings, which I had replaced with new ones. I believed it to possess the power of removing pain, and often prayed to it to cure the toothache, &c. Jane Ray sometimes professed to outgo us all in devotion to the Superior, and would pick up the feathers after making her bed. These she would distribute among us, saying, "when she dies, relics will begin to grow scarce, and you had better supply yourselves in season." Then she would treat the whole matter in some way to turn it into ridicule. Equally contradictory would she appear, when occasionally she would obtain leave from her Superior to tell her dream. With a serious face, which sometimes imposed upon all of us, and made us half believe she was in a perfect state of sanctity, she would narrate in French some unaccountable vision which she said she had enjoyed; then turning round, would say "There are some who do not understand me; you all ought to be informed." And then she would say something totally different in English, which put us

to the greatest agony for fear of laughing. Sometimes she would say she expected to be Superior herself one of those days.

While I was in the Congregational Nunnery, I had gone to the parish church, to confess, for although the nuns had a private confession-room in the building, the boarders were taken in parties through the street, by some of the nuns, to confess in the church; but in the Black Nunnery, as we had a chapel, and priests attending in the confessionals, we never left the building.

Our confessions there as novices were always performed in one way. Those of us who were to confess at a particular time, took our places on our knees near the confession-box, and after having repeated a number of prayers, etc., prescribed in our book, came up one at a time and kneeled beside a fine wooden lattice work, which entirely separated the confessor from us, yet permitted us to place our faces almost to his ear, and nearly concealed his countenance from our view. I recollect how the priests used to recline their heads on one side, and often cover their faces with their handkerchiefs, while they heard me confess my sins, and put questions to me, which were often of the most improper and revolting nature, naming crimes both unthought of and inhuman. Still, strange as it may seem, I was persuaded to believe that all this was their duty, or that it was done without sin.

Veiled nuns would often appear in the chapel at confession; though, as I understood, they generally confessed in private. Of the plan of their confession-rooms I had no information; but I supposed the ceremony to be conducted much on the same plan as in the chapel viz., with a lattice interposed between the confessor and the confessing.

Punishments were sometimes resorted to while I was a novice, though but seldom. The first time I ever saw a gag, was one day when a young novice had done something to offend the Superior. This

girl I always had compassion for, because she was very young, and an orphan. The Superior sent for a gag, and expressed her regret at being compelled, by the bad conduct of the child, to proceed to such a punishment; after which she put it into her mouth, so far as to keep it open, and then let it remain some time before she took it out. There was a leathern strap fastened to each end, and buckled to the back part of the head.

## CHAPTER IV.

## TEACHING AT ST. DENIS.

## AND MARRIAGE.

FTER I had been a novice four or five years from the time I commenced school in the Convent, one day I was treated by one of the nuns in a manner which displeased me, and because I expressed some resentment, I was required to beg her pardon. Not being satisfied with this, although I complied with the command, nor with the coldness with which the Superior treated me, I determined to quit the Convent at once, which I did without asking leave. There would have been no obstacle to my departure, novice as I then was, if I had asked permission; but I was too much displeased to wait for that, and went home without speaking to any one.

I soon after visited the town of St. Denis where I saw two young ladies with whom I had been formerly acquainted in Montreal, and one of them a school-mate at Mr. Workman's School. After some conversation with me, and learning that I had known a lady who kept a school in the place, they advised me to apply to her to be employed as her assistant teacher; for she was then instructing the government school in that place.

I visited her, and found her willing, and I engaged at once as her assistant.

The government society paid her £20 a year: she was obliged to teach ten children gratuitously; might have fifteen pence a month, for each ten scholars more, and then she was at liberty, according to the

regulations, to demand as much as she pleased for the other pupils. The course of instruction required by the society embraced only reading, writing and what was called ciphering. The books used were a spelling book, *l' Instruction de la Jeunesse*, the Catholic New Testament, and *l' Histoire de Canada*. When these had been read through, in regular succession, the children were dismissed as having completed their education. No difficulty is found in making the common French Canadians content with such an amount of instruction as this; on the contrary, it is often found very hard indeed to prevail upon them to send their children at all, for they say it takes too much of the love of God from them to send them to school. The teacher strictly complied with the requisition of the society, and the Roman Catholic catechism was regularly taught in the school, as much from choice, as from submission to authority, as she was a strict Catholic. I had brought with me the little bag in which I had so long kept the clippings of the thread left after making a dress for the Superior. Such was my regard for it, that I continued to wear it constantly around my neck, and to feel the same reverence for it as before. I occasionally had the tooth-ache during my stay at St. Denis, and then always relied on the influence of my little bag. On such occasions I would say—"By the virtue of this bag may I be delivered from the tooth-ache!" and I supposed that when it ceased it was owing to that cause.

While engaged in this manner I became acquainted with a man who soon proposed marriage; and young and ignorant of the world as I was, I heard his offers with favour. On consulting with my friend, she expressed a friendly interest for me, advised me against taking such a step, and especially as I knew so little about the man, except that a report was circulated unfavourable to his character. Unfortunately, I was not wise enough to listen to her advice, and hastily married. In a few weeks I had occasion to repent

of the step I had taken, as the report proved true which I thought justified, and indeed required, our separation. After I had been in St. Denis about three months, finding myself thus situated, and not knowing what else to do, I determined to return to the Convent, and pursue my former intention of becoming a Black Nun, could I gain admittance. Knowing the inquiries the Superior would make relative to me during my absence, before leaving St. Denis I agreed with the lady with whom I had been associated (when she went to Montreal, which she did very frequently) to say to the Lady Superior I had been under her protection during my absence, which would stop further inquiry; as I was sensible, should they know I had been married I should not be admitted.

I soon returned to Montreal, and, on reaching the city, I visited the Seminary, and in another interview with the Superior communicated my wish, and desired her to procure my re-admission as a novice.

After leaving for a short time, she returned and told me that the Superior of the Convent had consented, and I was introduced to her. She blamed me for leaving the Nunnery, but told me that I ought to be ever grateful to my guardian angel for taking care of me, and bringing me in safety back. I requested that I might be secured against the reproaches and ridicule of all the novices and nuns, which I thought some might cast upon me, unless prohibited by the Superior; and this she promised me. The money usually required for the admission of novices had not been expected from me. I had been admitted the first time without any such requisition; but now I chose to pay for my re-admission. I knew that she was able to dispense with such a demand, and she knew that I was not in possession of anything like the sum required.

But I was bent on paying to the Nunnery, and accustomed to receive the doctrine often repeated to me before that time, that when the advantage of

the church was consulted, the steps taken were justifiable, let them be what they would; I therefore resolved to obtain money on false pretenses, confident that if all were known, I should be far from displeasing the Superior. I went to the brigadier-major, and asked him to give me the money payable to my mother from her pension, which amounted to about thirty dollars, and without questioning my authority to receive it in her name, he gave it to me.

From several of her friends I obtained small sums under the name of loans, so that altogether I had soon raised a number of pounds, with which I hastened to the Nunnery, and deposited a part in the hands of the Superior. She received the money with evident satisfaction, though she must have known that I could not have obtained it honestly; and I was at once re-admitted as a novice.

Much to my gratification, not a word fell from the lips of my old associates in relation to my unceremonious departure, nor my voluntary return. The Superior's orders, I had not a doubt, had been explicitly laid down, and they certainly were carefully obeyed, for I never heard an allusion made to that subject during my subsequent stay in the Convent, except that, when alone, the Superior would sometimes say a little about it.

There were numbers of young ladies who entered awhile as novices, and became weary or disgusted with some things they observed, and remained but a short time. One of my cousins, who lived at Lachine, named Reed spent about a fortnight in the Convent with me. She however, conceived such an antipathy to the priests, that she used expressions which offended the Superior.

The first day that she attended mass, while at dinner with us in full community, she said before us all, "What a rascal that priest was, to preach against his best friend!"

All stared at such an unusual exclamation, and some one enquired what she meant.

"I say," she continued, "he has been preaching against Him who has given him his bread. Do you suppose that if there were no devil, there would be any priests?"

This bold young novice was immediately dismissed and in the afternoon we had a long sermon from the Superior on the subject.

It happened that I one day got a leaf of an English Bible which had been brought into the Convent, wrapped around some sewing silk, purchased at a store in the city. For some reason or other I determined to commit to memory a chapter it contained, which I soon did. It is the only chapter I ever learnt in the Bible, and I can now repeat it. It is the second of St. Matthew's gospel. "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea," &c.. It happened that I was observed reading the paper, and when the nature of it was discovered, I was condemned to do penance for my offence.

Great dislike to the Bible was shown by those who conversed with me about it, and several have remarked to me that if it were not for that Book, Catholics would never be led to renounce their own faith.

I have heard passages read from the Evangile, relating to the death of Christ; the conversion of Paul; a few chapters from St. Matthew, and perhaps a few others. The priests would also sometimes take a verse or two, and preach from it. I have read St. Peter's life, but only in the book called the "Lives of the Saints," He, I understood, has the keys of heaven and hell, and has founded our Church. As for Saint Paul, I remember, as I was taught to understand it, that he was once a great persecutor of the Roman Catholics, until he became convicted, and confessed to one of the father confessors, I don't know which. For who can expect to be forgiven. who does not become a catholic, and confess.

## CHAPTER V.

## CONFIRMATION.

THE day on which I received Confirmation was a distressing one to me. I believed the doctrine of the Roman Catholics, and according to them I was guilty of three mortal sins; concealing something at confession, sacrilege, in putting the body of Christ in the sacrament under my feet, and by receiving it while not in a state of grace! And now I had been led into all those sins in consequence of my marriage, which I never had acknowledged, as it would cut me off from being admitted as a nun.

On the day when I went to the Church to be confirmed with a number of others, I suffered extremely from the reproaches of my conscience. I believed, as I had been told, that a person who had been anointed with the holy oil of confirmation on the forehead, and dying in the state in which I was, would go down to hell, and, in the place where the oil had been rubbed, the names of my sins would blaze out of my forehead; these would be a sign by which the devils would know me, and would torment me the worse for them. I was thinking of all this, while I was sitting in the pew, waiting to receive the oil. I felt however some consolation, when my sins came to my mind; which I derived from another doctrine of the church, viz., that a bishop could absolve me from all sins any minute before my death; and I intended to confess them all before leaving the world.

At length the moment for administering the "sacrament" arrived, and a bell was rung. Those who had come to be confirmed had brought tickets from their confessors, which were thrown into a hat, and carried around by a priest, who in turn handed each to a bishop, by which he learned our names and applied a little of the oil to the foreheads. This was immediately rubbed off by a priest with a bit of cloth quite roughly.

I went home with some qualms of conscience, and often thought with dread of the following tale which I have heard told, to illustrate the sinfulness of conduct like mine.

A priest was once travelling, when he was passing by a house, his horse fell on its knees, and would not rise. His rider dismounted and went in to learn the cause of so extraordinary an occurrence. He found there a woman near death, to whom a priest was trying to administer the sacrament, but without success; for every time she attempted to swallow it it was thrown back out of her mouth into the chalice. He perceived it was owing to unconfessed sin, and took away the holy water from her; on which his horse rose from its knees, and he pursued his journey.

I also had been told, that we shall have as many devils biting us, if we go to hell, as we have unconfessed sins on our consciences.

I was required to devote myself for a year, to the study of the prayers and practice the ceremonies necessary on the reception of a nun. This I found a very tedious duty; but as I was released from the daily labours usually demanded of novices I felt little disposition to complain.

## CHAPTER VI.

## TAKING THE VEIL.

I WAS introduced into the Superior's room on the evening preceding the day on which I was to take the veil, to have an interview with the Bishop. The Superior was present, and the interview lasted half an hour. The Bishop on this as on other occasions appeared to be habitually rough in his manners. His address was by no means prepossessing.

Before I took the veil, I was ornamented for the ceremony, and was clothed in a dress belonging to the Convent, which was used on such occasions; and placed near the altar in the Chapel, in the view of a number of spectators, who had assembled. Taking the veil is an affair which occurs so frequently in Montreal, that it has long ceased to be regarded as a novelty; and although notice had been given in the French parish Church as usual, only a small audience assembled. Being well prepared with a long training, and frequent rehearsals, I stood waiting in my large flowing dress for the appearance of the Bishop. He soon presented himself, entering by a door behind the altar: I then threw myself at his feet, and asked him to confer upon me the veil. He expressed his consent; and then turning to the Superior, I threw myself prostrate at her feet, according to my instructions, repeating what I have before done at rehearsals, and made a movement as if to kiss her feet. This she prevented, or appeared to prevent, catching me by a sudden motion of her hand, and granted my request. I then kneeled before the Holy Sacrament

that is a large round wafer held by the Bishop between his forefinger and thumb, and made my vows.

This wafer I had been taught to regard with the utmost veneration, as the real body of Jesus Christ, the presence of which made the vows uttered before it binding in the most solemn manner.

After taking the vows, I proceeded to a small apartment behind the altar, accompanied by four nuns, where there was a coffin prepared with my nun's name engraved upon it:—

### “SAINT EUSTACE.”

My companions lifted it by four handles attached to it, while I threw off my dress, and put on that of a nun of Soeur Bourgeoise; and then we all returned to the chapel. I proceeded first, and was followed by the four nuns, the Bishop naming a number of worldly pleasures in rapid succession, in reply to which I as rapidly repeated:—

Je renounce, Je renounce, Je renounce.

The coffin was then placed in front of the altar and I advanced to place myself in it. This coffin was to be deposited, after the ceremony, in an out-house, to be preserved until my death, when it was to receive my corpse. There were reflections which I naturally made at that time, but I stepped in, extended myself, and laid still. A pillow had been placed at the head of the coffin, to support my head in a comfortable position. A thick black cloth was then spread over me, and the chanting of Latin hymns commenced. My thoughts were not the most pleasing during the time I lay in that situation. The pall, or Drape Mortel, as the cloth is called, had a strong smell of incense, which was always disagreeable to me, and then proved almost suffocating. I recollect the story of the novice, who, in taking the veil, lay down in her coffin like me, and was covered in the same man-

ner, but on the removal of the covering was found dead.

When I was uncovered, I rose, stepped out of my coffin, and kneeled. Other ceremonies then followed, of no interest; after which the music commenced, and here the whole was finished.

I then returned to the Superior's room, followed by the other nuns, who walked two by two, with their hands folded on their breasts, and their eyes cast down upon the floor. The nun who was to be my companion in future, then walked at the end of the procession. On reaching the Superior's door they all left me, and I entered alone, and found her with the Bishop and two prests.

The Superior now informed me, that having taken the black veil, it only remained that I should swear the three oaths customary on becoming a nun; and that some explanation would be necessary from her. I was now to have access to every part of the edifice, even to the cellar, where two of the sisters were imprisoned for causes which she did not mention. I must be informed that one of my great duties was to obey the priests in all things; and this I soon learnt, to my astonishment and horror, was to live in the practice of criminal intercourse with them. I expressed some of the feelings which this announcement excited in me, which came upon me like a flash of lightning; but the only effect was to set her arguing with me, in favour of the crime, representing it as a virtue acceptable to God and honorable to me. The priests, she said, were not situated like other men, being forbidden to marry; while they lived secluded, laborious, and self-denying lives for our salvation. They might, indeed, be considered our saviours, as without their service we could not obtain pardon of sin, and must go to hell. Now it was our solemn duty, on withdrawing from the world to consecrate our lives to religion, to practice every species of self-denial. We could not be too humble,

nor mortify our feelings too far; this was to be done by opposing them, and acting contrary to them; and what she proposed was, therefore, pleasing in the sight of God. I now felt how foolish I had been to place myself in their power.

From what she said, I could draw no other conclusions but that I was required to act like the most abandoned of beings, and that my future associates were habitually guilty of the most heinous and detestable crimes. When I repeated my expressions of surprise and horror, she told me that such feelings were very common at first, and that many other nuns had expressed themselves as I did, who had long since changed their minds. She even said, on her entrance into the nunnery, she had felt like me.

Doubts, she declared, were among our greatest enemies. They would lead us to question every point of duty, and induce us to waver at every step. They arose only from remaining imperfection, and were always evidences of sin. Our only way was to dismiss them immediately, repent and confess them. They were deadly sins, and would condemn us to hell, if we should die without confessing them. Priests, she insisted, could not sin. It was a thing impossible. Every thing that they did, and wished was right. She hoped I would see the reasonableness and duty of the oaths I was then about to take, and be faithful to them.

She gave me other information, which excited feelings in me, scarcely less dreadful. Infants were sometimes born in the Convent, but they were always baptised, and immediately strangled! This secured their everlasting happiness; for the baptism purifies them from all sinfulness, and being sent out of the world before they had time to do anything wrong, they were at once admitted into heaven. How happy she exclaimed, are those who secure immortal happiness to such little beings! Their

little souls would thank those who kill their bodies, if they had it in their power.

Into what a place, and among what society, had I been admitted! How different did a convent now appear from what I supposed it to be! The holy women I had always fancied the nuns to be, the venerable Lady Superior, what were they? And the priests of the Seminary adjoining (some of whom, indeed, I had reason to think were base and profligate men,) what were they all? I now learned that they were often admitted into the nunnery, and allowed to indulge in the greatest crimes, which they called virtues.

After having listened to the Superior alone, a number of the nuns were admitted, and took a free part in the conversation. They concurred in everything which she told me, and repeated, without any shame or compunction, things which criminated themselves. I must acknowledge the truth, that all this had an effect upon my mind. I questioned whether I might not be in the wrong, and felt as if their reasoning might have some just foundation. I had been several years under the tuition of Catholics, and was ignorant of the scriptures, and unaccustomed to the society, example, and conversation of Protestants; had not heard any appeal to the Bible as authority, but had been taught, both by precept and example, to receive as truth everything said by the priests. I had not heard their authority questioned, nor anything said of any other standard of faith. I had long been familiar with the corrupt and licentious expressions used at confessions, and believed that other women were also. I had no standard of duty to refer to, and no judgment of my own which I knew how to use.

All around me insisted that my doubts proved only my own ignorance and sinfulness; that they knew by experience that they would soon give place to true knowledge, and an advance in religion; and I felt something like indecision.

Still there was so much that disgusted me in the debased characters around me, that I would most gladly have escaped from the nunnery, and never returned. But that was a thing not to be thought of. I was in their power, and this I deeply felt, while I thought that there was not one among the whole number of nuns to whom I could look for kindness. There was one, however, who began to speak to me in a tone that gained my confidence,—the nun whom I have mentioned as distinguished by her oddity, Jane Ray, who made us so much amusement when I was a novice. Although there was nothing in her face, form, or manners to give me any pleasure, she addressed me with apparent friendliness; and while she seemed to concur with some things spoken by them, took an opportunity to whisper a few words in my ear, unheard by them, intimating that I had better comply with everything the Superior desired, if I would save my life. I was somewhat alarmed before, but I now became much more so, and determined to make no further resistance. The Superior then made me repeat the three oaths; and, when I had sworn them, I was shown into the community-rooms, and remained some time with the nuns, who were released from their employments, and enjoyed a recreation day, on account of the admission of a new sister. My feelings during the remainder of the day I shall not describe, but pass on to the ceremonies that took place at dinner.

At eleven o'clock the bell rang for dinner, and the nuns all took their places in a double row, in the same order as they left the chapel in the morning, except that my companion and myself were stationed at the head of the line. Standing thus for a moment, with our hands placed one on the other over the breast, and hidden in our large cuffs, with our heads bent forward, and eyes fixed on the floor; an old nun, who stood at the door, clapped her hands as a signal for us to proceed; and the procession moved on, while we all com-

menced the repetition of litanies. We walked on in this order, repeating all the way until we reached the dining-room, where we were divided into two lines; those on the right passing down one side of the long table, and those on the left the other; and each stopped in her place. The plates were all arranged, each with a knife, fork, and spoon, rolled up in a napkin, and tied round with a linen band marked with the owner's name. My own were prepared like the rest; and on the band around them I found my new name written—"Saint Eustace."

There we stood till all had concluded the litany, when the old nun who had taken her place at the head of the table, said the prayer before meat, beginning, "Benedicte," and we sat down. I do not remember of what our dinner consisted, but we usually had soup, and some plain dish of meat, the remains of which were served up at supper as fricassee. One of the nuns, who had been appointed to read that day, rose and began a lecture from a book put into her hands by the Superior, while the rest of us ate in perfect silence. The nun who reads during dinner stays afterwards to dine. As fast as we finished our meals, each rolled up her knife, fork and spoon, in her napkin, and bound them together with the band, and sat with hands folded. The old nun then said a short prayer, arose, stepped a little aside, clapped her hands, and we marched towards the door, bowing as we passed before a little chapel, or glass box, containing a wax image of the infant Jesus.

Nothing important occurred till late in the afternoon, when, as I was sitting in the community-room, Father Dufresne called me out, saying he wished to speak with me. I feared what was his intention; but I dared not disobey. In a private apartment, he treated me in a brutal manner; and, from two other priests, I afterwards received similar usage that evening. Father Dufresne afterwards appeared again; and I was compelled to remain in company with him until morning.

I am assured that the conduct of priests in our

Convent had never been exposed, and it is not imagined by the people of the United States. This induces me to say what I do. notwithstanding the strong reasons I have to let it remain unknown. Still I cannot force myself to speak on such subjects except in the most brief manner.

---

## CHAPTER VII.

### DAILY CEREMONIES

ON Thursday morning, the bell rang at half-past six to waken us. The old nun who was acting as night-watch immediately spoke aloud:

“Voici le Seigneur qui vient.” (Behold the Lord cometh.) The nuns all responded:

“Allons—y devant lui.” (Let us go and meet him.)

We arose immediately, and dressed quickly, stepping into the passage-way, at the foot of our bed, as soon as we were ready, and taking place each beside her opposite companion. Thus we were drawn up in a double row the length of the room, with our hands folded across our breasts, and concealed in the broad cuffs of our sleeves. Not a word was uttered. When the signal was given, we all proceeded to the community-room, and took our places in rows facing the entrance, near which the Superior was seated in a vergiere. We first repeated “Au nom du Pere, du Fils, et du Saint Esprit —Ainsi soit il.” (In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,—Amen.) We then kneeled and kissed the floor; then, still kneeling, on our knees, we said a long prayer, “Divin Jesus, sauveur de mon ame.” (Divine Jesus, Saviour of my soul.) Then the Lord’s prayer, three Hail Marys, four creeds, and five con-

fessions, (confesse à Dieu.) the ten commandments; the acts of faith, and a prayer to the Virgin, in Latin, which I never understood a word of. Next we said litanies of the Holy Name of Jesus, in Latin, which were afterwards to be repeated several times in the day. Then came the prayer for the beginning of the day; then bending down, we commenced the Orison Mental, (or Mental Orison,) which last about an hour and a half.

This exercise was considered very solemn. We were told in the nunnery that a certain saint was saved by the use of it, as she never omitted it. It consists of several parts: First, the Superior read to us a chapter from a book, which occupied five minutes. Then profound silence prevailed for fifteen minutes, during which we were meditating upon it. Then she read another chapter of equal length on a different subject, and we meditated upon that another quarter of an hour; and after a third reading and meditation, we finished the exercise with a prayer for contrition, in which we asked forgiveness for the sins committed during the Orison. During this hour and a half I became very weary, having before been kneeling for some time, and having then to sit in another position more uncomfortable, with my feet under me, and my hands clasped, and my head bowed down.

When the Orison was over, we all rose to the upright kneeling posture, and repeated several prayers, and the litanies of the providences, "providence de Dieu," &c., then followed a number of Latin prayers, which we repeated on the way to mass, for in the nunnery we had mass daily.

When mass was over, we proceeded in our usual order to breakfast, practising the same forms which I have described at dinner. Having made our meal in silence, we repeated the litanies of the "holy name of Jesus," as we proceeded to the community room; and such as had not finished them on their arrival, threw themselves upon their knees until they had gone

through with them and then kissing the floor, rose again. At nine o'clock commenced the lecture which was read by a nun appointed to perform that duty that day: all the rest of us in the room being engaged in work.

The nuns were distributed in different community rooms, at different kinds of work, and each was listening to a lecture. This continued until ten o'clock, when the recreation-bell rang. We still continued our work, but the nuns conversed on subjects permitted by the rules, in the hearing of the old nuns, one of whom was seated in each of the groups. At half-past ten the silence bell rang, and this conversation instantly ceased, and the recitation of some Latin prayers continued half an hour.

At eleven o'clock the dinner-bell rang, and we went through the forms of the preceding day. We proceeded two by two. The old nun clapped her hands as the first couple reached the door, when we stopped. The first two dipped their fingers into the font, touched with the holy water the breast, forehead, and each side, thus forming a cross, said "In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Amen" and then walked to the dining-room repeating the litanies. The rest did the same. On reaching the door the couples divided, and the two rows of nuns marching up, stopped, and faced the table against their plates. There we repeated the close of the litany aloud. The old nun pronounced "Benedicte," and we sat down. One of us read a lecture, during the whole meal: she stays to eat after the rest have retired. When we had dined, each of us folded up her napkin, and again folded her hands. The old nun then repeated a short prayer in French, and stepping from the head of the table, let us pass out as we came in. Each of us bowed in passing the little chapel near the door, which is a glass case, containing a waxen figure of the infant Jesus. When we reached the community-room we took our places in rows, and kneeled upon the floor, while a nun read aloud.

“Doleurs de notre Sainte Marie,” (the sorrows of our holy Mary). At the end of each verse we responded “Ave Maria.” We then repeated the litany of the providences and the “Benissante.”

Then we kissed the floor, and rising, took our work, to converse on permitted subjects—called *recreation*—till one o’clock. We then repeated litanies, one at a time in succession, still sewing, for an hour.

At two o’clock commenced the afternoon lectures, which lasted till near three. At that hour one of the nuns stood up in the middle of the room, and asked each of us a question out of the catechism; and such as did not answer correctly had to kneel, until that exercise was concluded, upon as many dry peas as there were verses in the chapter out of which they were questioned. I have sometimes kneeled on peas until I suffered great inconvenience and pain. It soon makes one feel as if needles were running through the skin. At four o’clock recreation commenced, when we were allowed to speak to each other while at work. At half-past four we began to repeat prayers in Latin, while we worked till five o’clock, when we repeated the “prayers for the examination of conscience,” the “prayer after confession,” the “prayer before sacrament,” and the “prayer after sacrament.” At dark, we laid our work aside, and went over the same prayers which we had repeated in the morning excepting the orison mental: instead of that long exercise. we examined our consciences, to determine whether we had performed the resolution we had made in the morning, and such as had repeated an “acte de joie,” or expression of gratitude; such as had not, said an “acte de contrition.”

When the prayers were concluded, any nun who had been disobedient in the day knelt and asked pardon of the Superior and her companions “for the scandal she had caused them.” and then requested a penance to perform. When all the penances had been imposed, we all proceeded to the eating-room to supper, repeating litanies on the way. The ceremonies

were the same as at dinner, except that no lecture was read. We ate in silence, and went out bowing to the chapelle, and repeating litanies. Returning to the community-room, we had more prayers to repeat, which are called La couronne (crown), which consists of the following parts:—1st. Four Paters. 2nd. Four Ave Marias. 3rd. Four Gloria patris. 4th. Benissez Santeys. At the close we kissed the floor; then had recreation till half-past eight o'clock, conversing on permitted subjects, but closely watched, and not allowed to sit in the corners.

At half-past eight a bell was rung, and a chapter was read to us, in a book of meditations, to employ our minds upon during our waking hours at night. Standing near the door, we dipped our fingers in the holy water, crossed and blessed ourselves and proceeded to the sleeping room two by two. When we had got into bed, we repeated a prayer beginning with.—

“Mon Dieu, je vous donne mon cœur,”

“My God I give you my heart;”

and then an old nun, bringing some holy water, sprinkled it on our beds to drive away the devil, while we crossed ourselves with it again. At nine o'clock the bell rang, and all awake repeated a prayer, called the offrande; those who were asleep were considered as excused.

After my admission among the nuns, I had more opportunity to observe the conduct of mad Jane Ray. She behaved quite differently from the rest, and with a degree of levity irreconcileable with the rules. She was a large woman, with nothing beautiful or attractive in her face, form, or manners, careless in her dress, and of a restless disposition, which prevented her from applying herself to anything for any length of time, and kept her roving about, and always talking to somebody or other. She was dressed in the plain garments of the nuns, bound by the same vows, and accustomed to the same life, resembling them in nothing else, and frequently interrupting all their employments. She was apparently always studying, or

pursuing some odd fancy; now rising from sewing to walk up and down, or straying in another apartment looking about, addressing some of us, passing out again, or saying something to make us laugh. But what showed she was no novelty, was the little attention paid to her, and the levity with which she was treated by the whole nuns; even the Superior every day passed over irregularities which she would have punished with penances, in any other. I soon perceived that she betrayed two distinct traits of character; a kind disposition towards such as she chose to prefer, and a pleasure in teasing those she disliked, or such as had offended her.

---

## CHAPTER VIII.

### RELIGIOUS LIES.

I WILL now give from memory a general description of the interior of the Convent of Black Nuns, except the few apartments which I never saw. I may be inaccurate in some things, as the apartments and passages of that spacious building are numerous and various; but I am willing to risk my credit for truth and sincerity on the general correspondence between my description and things as they are. And this would, perhaps, be as good a case as any by which to test the truth of my statements, were it possible to obtain access to the interior. It is well known that none but veiled nuns, the bishop and priests, are ever admitted; and, of course, that I cannot have seen what I profess to describe, if I had not been a black nun. The priests who read this book will acknowledge to themselves the truth of my description; but will, of course, deny it to the world,

and probably exert themselves to destroy my credit. I offer to every reader the following description, knowing that time may possibly throw open those secret recesses, and allow the entrance of those who can satisfy themselves of its truth. Some of my declarations may be thought deficient in evidence, which must of necessity be in the present state of things. But here is a kind of evidence on which I rely, as I see how unquestionable and satisfactory it must prove, whenever it shall be obtained.

If the interior of the Black Nunnery, whenever it shall be examined, is materially different from the following description, then I shall claim no confidence of my readers. If it resemble it, they will, I presume, place confidence in some of those declarations, on which I may never be corroborated by true and living witnesses.

I am sensible that great changes may be made in the furniture of apartments ; that new walls may be constructed, or old ones removed ; and I have been informed that masons have been employed in the Nunnery since I left it. I well know that entire changes cannot be made, and that enough must remain to substantiate my description, whenever the truth shall be known.

#### THE FIRST STOREY.

Beginning at the extremity of the western wing of the Convent, towards Notre Dame street, on the first storey, there is—

1. The nuns' private chapel, adjoining which is a passage to a small projection of the building extending from the upper storey to the ground, with small windows. Into the passage we were required to bring wood from the yard, and pile it for use.

2. A large community-room, with plain benches fixed against the wall to sit and lower ones in front to place our feet upon. There is a fountain in the passage near the chimney at the further end, for

washing the hands and face, with a green curtain sliding on a rod before it. This passage leads to the old nuns' sleeping-room on the right, and the Superior's sleeping-room beyond it, as well as to a stair-case which conduct to the nuns' sleeping-room above. At the end of the passage is a door opening into—

3. The dining-room; this is larger than the community-room, and has three long tables for eating, and a collection of little pictures, a crucifix, and an image of the infant Saviour in a glass case. This apartment has four doors, by the first of which we are supposed to have entered, while one opens to a pantry, and the third and fourth to the two next apartments.

4. A large community-room, with tables for sewing, and a stair-case on the opposite left-hand corner.

5. A community-room for prayer, used by both nuns and novices. In the farther right-hand corner is a small room, partitioned off, called the room for the examination of conscience, which I had visited while a novice by permission of the Superior, and where nuns and novices occasionally resorted to reflect on their character, usually in preparation for the sacrament, or when they had transgressed some of the rules. This little room was hardly large enough to contain half a dozen persons at a time.

6. Next, beyond, is a large community-room for Sundays. A door leads to the yard, and thence to a gate in the wall on the cross street.

7. Adjoining this is a sitting-room, fronting on the cross street, with two windows, and a store room on the side opposite them. There is but little furniture, and that very plain.

8. From this room a door leads into what I call the wax-room, as it contains many figures in wax, not intended for sale. There we sometimes used to pray, or meditate on the Saviour's passion. This room projects from the main building; leaving it, you enter a long passage, with cupboards on the right, in which are stored crockeryware, knives and forks, and other articles of

table furniture, to replace those worn out or broken—all of the plainest description; also, shovels, tongs, &c. This passage leads to—

9. A corner room, with a few benches, &c., and a door leading to a gate in the street. Here some of the medicines were kept, and persons were often admitted on business, or to obtain medicines with tickets from the priests; and waited till the Superior or an old nun could be sent for. Beyond this room we never were allowed to go; and I cannot speak from personal knowledge of what came next.

#### THE SECOND STOREY.

Beginning, as before, at the western extremity of the north wing, but on the second storey, the farthest apartment in that direction which I ever entered was—

1. The nuns' sleeping-room, which I have described. Here is an access to the projection mentioned in speaking of the first storey. The stairs by which we came up to bed are at the farther end of the room; and near them a crucifix and font of holy water. A door at the end of the room opens into a passage with two small rooms, and closets between them, containing bedclothes. Next you enter—

2. A small community-room, beyond which is a passage with a narrow staircase, seldom used, which leads to the fourth community-room, in the fourth storey. Following the passage just mentioned you enter by a door—

3. A little sitting-room furnished in the following manner: with chairs, a sofa on the north side covered with a red-figured cover and fringe; a table in the middle, commonly bearing one or two books, an ink-stand, pen, &c. At one corner is a little projection into the room, caused by a staircase leading from above to the floor below, without any communication with the second storey. This room has a door opening upon a staircase leading on the yard, on the opposite side is a gate opening into the cross street. By this way the physician is admitted, except when he comes

later than usual. When he comes in, he sits a little while, until a nun goes into the adjoining nuns' sick-room, to see if all is ready, and returns to admit him. After prescribing for the patient he goes no further, but returns by the way he enters; and these are the only rooms into which he is admitted.

4. The nuns' sick-room adjoins the little sitting-room on the east, and has four windows towards the north, with beds ranged in two rows from end to end, and a few more between them, near the opposite extremity. The door to the sitting-room swings to the left, and behind it is a table, while a glass case contains a wax figure of the infant Saviour, with several sheep. Near the north-eastern corner are two doors, one of which opens into a narrow passage, leading to the head of the great staircase that conducts to the cross street. By this passage the physician sometimes finds his way to the sick-room, when he comes late. He rings the bell at the gate, which I was told had a concealed pull, known only to him and the priests, proceeds upstairs and through the passage, rapping three times at the door of the sick-room, which is opened by a nun in attendance, after she had given one rap in reply. He returns by the same way.

5. Next, beyond the sick-room, is a large unoccupied apartment, half divided by two partitions, which leave an open space in the middle. Here some of the old nuns meet in the day time.

6. A door from this apartment opens into another, not appropriated to any particular use, but containing a table, where medicines are sometimes prepared by an old nun. Passing through this room you enter a passage, with doors on its four sides: that on the left, which is kept fastened on the inside, leads to the staircase and gate; and that in the front to private sick-rooms.

7. That on the right leads to another, appropriated to nuns suffering with the most loathsome disease. There were usually a number of straw mattresses in

that room, as I well know, having helped to carry them in, after the yardman had filled them. A door beyond enters into a store-room, which extends also beyond this apartment. On the right another door opens into another passage, crossing which you enter by a door—

8. A room with a bed and screen in one corner, on which nuns were laid to be examined before their introduction into the sick-room last mentioned. Another door, opposite, opens into a passage, in which is a staircase leading down.

9. Beyond this is a spare room, sometimes used to store apples, boxes of different things, &c.

10. Returning now to the passage which opens on one side upon the stairs to the gate, we enter the only remaining door, which leads into an apartment usually occupied by some of the old nuns, and frequently by the Superior.

11. and 12. Beyond this are two more sick-rooms, in one of which those nuns stay who are waiting their accouchment, and in the other those who have passed it.

13. The next is a small sitting-room, where a priest waits to baptise the infants previous to their murder. A passage leads from this room on the left, by the doors of two succeeding apartments, neither of which have I ever entered.

14. The first of them is the "holy retreat," or room occupied by the priests while suffering the penalty of their licentiousness.

15. The other is a sitting-room to which they have access. Beyond these the passage leads to two rooms containing closets for the storage of various articles; and two others, where persons are received who come on business.

The public hospitals succeed, and extend a considerable distance to the extremity of the building. By a public entrance in that part priests often come into the Nunnery; and I have often seen some of them thereabouts, who must have entered that way. Priests often

get into the "holy retreat," without exposing themselves to the view of other parts of the Convent, and have been first known to be there by the yard-nuns being sent to the Seminary for their clothes.

The Congregational Nunnery was founded by a nun, called Sister Bourgeoise. She taught a school in Montreal, and left property for the foundation of a Convent. Her body is buried, and her heart is kept under the Nunnery in an iron chest, which has been shown to me, with the assurance that it continues in perfect preservation, although she has been dead more than one hundred and fifty years. In the chapel is the following inscription :—

"Sœur Bourgeoise, Fondatrice du convent." (Sister Bourgeoise, Founder of the Convent.)

Nothing was more common than for the Superior to step hastily into our community-room, while numbers of us were assembled there, and hastily communicate her wishes in words like these :—

"Here are the parents of such a novice; come with me and bear me out in this story." She would then mention the outlines of a tissue of falsehoods she had just invented that we might be prepared to fabricate circumstances, and throw in whatever else might favour the deception. This was justified and highly commended, by what we were instructed.

It was a common remark at the initiation of a new nun into the Black Nunnery to receive the black veil, that the introduction of another novice into the Convent as a veiled nun, always caused the introduction of a veiled nun into heaven as a saint, which was on account of the disappearance of some of the older nuns always at the entrance of new ones.

To witness the scenes which often occurred between us and strangers would have struck a person most powerfully, if he had known how truth was set at nought. The Superior, with a serious and dignified air, and a pleasant voice and aspect, would commence a recital of things most favourable to the character of the absent novice, representing her equally fond of her

situation, and beloved by the other inmates. The tale told by the Superior, however unheard before might have been any of her statements, was then attested by us, who in every way we could think of, confirmed her declarations beyond the reach of doubt.

Sometimes the Superior would intrust the management of such a case to the nuns, to habituate us to the practice in which she was so highly accomplished, or to relieve herself of what would have been a serious burden to most other persons, and to ascertain whether she could depend upon us. Often have I seen her throw open a door, and say, in a hurried manner,

“Who can tell the best story?”

One point on which we had received particular instructions was, the nature of falsehoods. I have heard many a speech, and many a sermon; and I was led to believe that it was of great importance, one on which it was a duty to be well informed, as well as to act.

“What!” exclaimed a priest one day—“what, a nun of your age, and not know the difference between a wicked and a religious lie?” He then went on, as had been done many times in my hearing, to show the essential difference between the two different kinds of falsehoods. A lie told merely for the injury of another, for our own interest alone, or for no object at all, he painted as a sin worthy of penance. But a lie told for the good of the church or convent, was meritorious, and the telling of it a duty. And of this class of lies there are many varieties and shades. This doctrine had been inculcated on me and my companions, more times than I can enumerate. We often saw the practice of it, and were frequently made to take part in it. Whenever anything which the Superior thought important, could be most conveniently accomplished by falsehood, she resorted to it without scruple.

There was a class of cases, in which she more frequently relied on deception than any other.

The friends of novices frequently applied at the Con-

vent to see them or to inquire after their welfare. It was common for them to be politely refused an interview, on some account or other, a mere pretext; and then the Superior sought to make as favourable an impression as possible on the visitors. Sometimes she would make up a story on the spot, and tell the strangers; requiring some of us to confirm it in the most convincing way. At other times she would make over to us the task of deceiving, and we were commended in proportion to our ingenuity and success.

Some nun usually showed her submission by immediately stepping forward. She would then add, that the parents of such a novice, whom she named, were in waiting, and it was necessary that they should be told such and such things. To perform so difficult a task well, was considered a difficult duty, and it was one of the most certain ways to gain the favour of the Superior. Whoever volunteered to make a story on the spot, was sent immediately to tell it, and the other nuns present with her under strict injunctions to uphold her in everything she might state. The Superior, on all such occasions, when she did not herself appear, hastened to the apartment adjoining, there to listen through the thin partition, to hear whether all performed their parts aright. It was not uncommon for her to go rather further, when she wanted to give such explanations as she could have desired.

She would then enter abruptly, ask, "Who can tell a good story this morning?" and hurry us off without a moment's delay, to do our best at a venture, without waiting for instructions. It would be curious, could a stranger from the "wicked world" outside the Convent, witness such a scene. One of the nuns who felt in a favourable humour to undertake the proposed task, would step forward, and signify readiness in the usual way, by a knowing wink of one eye, and a slight toss of the head.

"Well, go and do the best you can." the Superior would say; "and all the rest of you mind and swear to

it." The latter part of the order was always performed; for in every case, all the nuns present appeared as unanimous witnesses of everything that was uttered by the spokeswoman.

We were constantly hearing it repeated, that we must never again look upon ourselves as our own; but must remember, that we were solemnly and irrecoverably devoted to God. I cannot speak to every particular with equal freedom: but I wish my readers to understand the condition in which we were placed, and the means used to reduce us to what we had to submit to. Not only were we required to perform the several tasks imposed upon us at work, prayers and penances, under the idea that we were performing solemn duties to our Maker, but everything else which was required of us, we were constantly told, was indispensable in His sight. The priests, we admitted, were the servants of God, especially appointed by His authority to teach us our duty, to absolve us from sin, and lead us to heaven. Without their assistance, we had allowed, we could never enjoy the favour of God; unless they administered the sacrament to us, we could not enjoy everlasting happiness. Having acknowledged all this, we had no objection to urge against admitting any other demand that might be made by them. If we thought an act ever so criminal, the Superior would tell us that the priests acted under the direct sanction of God, and *could not sin*. Of course, then, it could not be wrong to comply with any of their requests, because they could not demand anything but what was right. On the contrary, to refuse to do anything they asked would necessarily be sinful. Such doctrines admitted, and such practices performed, it will not seem wonderful that we often felt something of their preposterous character.

Sometimes we took pleasure in ridiculing some of the favourite themes of our teachers; and I recollect one subject particularly, that afforded us merriment.

It may seem irreverent in me to give the account, but I do it to show how things of a solemn nature were sometimes treated by women bearing the title of saints. A Canadian novice, who spoke very broken English, one day remarked that she was performing some duty "for the God." This peculiar expression had something ridiculous to our ears: and it was soon repeated again and again, in application to various ceremonies which we had to perform. Mad Jane Ray seized upon it with avidity, and with her aid it soon took the place of a by-word in conversation, so that we were constantly reminding each other that we were doing this thing and that thing "for the God." Nor did we stop here; when the Superior called upon us to bear witness to one of her religious lies, or to fabricate the most spurious one the time would admit; we were sure to be reminded, on our way to the stranger's room, that we were doing it "for the God." And so it was when other things were mentioned—everything which belonged to our condition was spoken of in similar terms.

I have hardly detained the reader long enough to give him a just impression of the stress laid on confession. It is one of the great points to which our attention was constantly directed. We were directed to keep a strict and constant watch over our thoughts; to have continually before our minds the rules of the Convent, to remember every devotion, and tell all, even the smallest, at confession, either to the Superior or to the priest. My mind was thus kept in a continual state of activity which proved very wearisome; and it required the constant exertion of our teachers to keep us up to the practice they inculcated.

Another tale recurs to me, of those which were frequently told us, to make us feel the importance of unreserved confession.

A nun of our Convent, who had hidden some sin from her confessor, died suddenly, and without any one to confess her. Her sisters assembled to pray for the peace of her soul, when she appeared and said, that it

would be of no use, but rather troublesome to her, as her pardon was impossible. The doctrine is, that prayers made for souls guilty of unconfessed sin, do but sink them deeper in hell; and this is the reason for not praying for Protestants.

The authority of the priest in everything, and the enormity of every act which opposes it, were also impressed upon our minds by our teachers. A "Father" told us the following story:

A man once died who had failed to pay some money which the priest had asked of him; he was condemned to be burnt in purgatory until he should pay it, but had permission to come back to this world, and take a human body to work in. He came again on earth, and hired himself to a rich man as a labourer. He worked all day, with the fire burning in him, unseen by other people; but while he was in bed that night a girl perceiving the smell of brimstone, looked through a crack in the wall, and saw him covered with flames. She informed his master, who questioned him the next morning, and found that he was secretly suffering the pains of purgatory for neglecting to pay a sum of money to the priest. He, therefore, furnished him with the amount due; it was paid, and the servant went off immediately to heaven. The priest cannot forgive any debt due unto him, because it is the Lord's estate.

While at confession, I was urged to hide nothing from the priests, they said that they already knew what was in my heart, but would not tell, because it was necessary for me to confess it. I believed that the priests were acquainted with my thoughts; and often stood in awe of them. They often told me that they had the power to strike me dead at any moment.

---

## CHAPTER IX.

## FIRST VISIT TO THE CELLAR,

I FOUND that I had several namesakes among the nuns, two others who had already borne away my name, Saint Eustace. This was not a solitary case, for there were five Saint Marys, and three Saint Monros, besides two novices of that name. Of my namesakes I have little to say, for they resembled most nuns; being so much cut off from intercourse with me and other sisters, that I never saw anything in them, nor learnt anything worth mentioning.

Several of my new companions were squaws, who had taken the veil at different times. They were from the Indian settlements in the country, but were not distinguishable by any striking habits of character from other nuns, and were not very different in their appearance when in their usual dress, and engaged in their occupations. They were treated with much kindness and lenity by the Superior and the old nuns; and this was done in order to render them as contented and happy in their situation as possible: and I should have attributed the motives for this partiality to their wishing that they might not influence others to keep away, had I not known they were, like ourselves, unable to exert such an influence. And therefore I could not satisfy my mind why this difference was made. Many of the Indians were remarkably devoted to the priests, believing everything they were taught; and as it is represented to be not only a high honour, but a real advantage to a family, to have one of its members become a nun, Indian parents pay large sums of money for the admission of their daughters into a convent. The father of one of the squaws, I was told, paid to the Superior nearly her weight in silver on her reception, although he was obliged to sell nearly all his pro-

perty to do it. This he did voluntarily, because he thought himself overpaid by having the advantage of her prayers, self-sacrifices, &c., for himself and family. The squaws sometimes served to amuse us; for when we were partially dispirited or gloomy, the Superior would send them to dress themselves in their Indian garments, which usually excited us to merriment.

Amongst the squaw nuns whom I remember, was one of the Saint Hypolites, not the one who figured in a dreadful scene, described in another part of this narrative, but a woman of a more mild and humane character.

A few days after my reception, the Superior sent me into the cellar for coals; and after she had given me directions, I proceeded down a staircase with a lamp. I soon found myself on the bare earth, in a spacious place, so dark that I could not at once distinguish its form or size, but I observed that it had very solid stone walls, and was arched overhead, at no great elevation. Following my directions, I proceeded onwards from the foot of the stairs, where appeared to be one end of the cellar. After walking about fifteen paces, I passed three small doors on the right, fastened with large iron bolts on the outside, pushed into posts of stone work, each having a small opening above, covered with a fine grating, secured by a smaller bolt. On my left were three similar doors, resembling these, and opposite them.

Beyond these, the space became broader; the doors evidently closed small compartments, projecting from the outer wall of the cellar. I soon stepped upon a wooden floor, on which were heaps of wood, coarse linen, and other articles, deposited there for occasional use. I crossed the floor, and found the bare earth again under my feet.

A little further on I found the cellar contracted in size by a row of closets, or smaller compartments, projecting on each side. These were closed by different

doors from the first, having a simple fastening, and no opening through them.

Just beyond, on the left side, I passed a staircase leading up, and then three doors, much resembling those first described, standing opposite three more, on the other side of the cellar. Having passed these I found the cellar again enlarged as before, and here the earth appeared as if mixed with some whitish substance, which attracted my attention.

As I proceeded, I found the whiteness increase, until the surface looked almost like snow, and I observed before me a hole dug so deep into the earth that I could perceive no bottom. I stopped to observe it—it was circular, twelve or fifteen feet across, in the middle of the cellar, and unprotected by any curb, so that one might easily have walked into it in the dark.

The white substance was spread all over the surface around it; and lay in such quantities on all sides, that it seemed as if a great deal must have been thrown into the hole. It occurred to me that the white substance was lime, and that this was the place where the infants were buried, after being murdered, as the Superior had informed me. I knew that lime is often used by Roman Catholics in burying places; and this accounted for its being about the spot in such quantities.

This was a shocking thought to me; but I can hardly tell how it affected me, as I had been prepared to expect dreadful things, and undergone trials which prevented me from feeling as I should formerly have done in similar circumstances.

I passed the pit, therefore, with dreadful thoughts about the little corpses which might be in that secret burying place, but with recollections also of the declarations about the favour done their souls in sending them direct to heaven, and the necessary virtue accompanying all the actions of the priests.

There is a window or two on each side nearly against the hole, in at which are sometimes thrown articles

brought to them from without for the use of the Convent. Through the window on my right, which opens into the yard, towards the cross street, lime is received from carts; I then saw a large heap of it near the place.

Passing the hole, I came to a spot where was another projection on each side, with three cells like those I first described. Beyond them, in another part of the cellar, were heaps of vegetables, and other things; and on the left I found the charcoal I was in search of. This was placed in a heap against the wall, near a small high window, like *the rest*, at which it is thrown in. Beyond this spot, at a short distance, the cellar terminated.

The top, quite to that point, is arched overhead, though at different heights, for the earth on the bottom is uneven, and in some places several feet higher than in others. Not liking to be alone in so spacious and gloomy a part of the Convent, especially after the discovery I had made, I hastened to fill my basket and to return.

Here then I was in a place which I had considered as the nearest imitation of heaven to be found on earth, amongst a society where deeds were perpetrated, which I had believed to be criminal, and had now found the place in which harmless infants were unfeelingly thrown out of sight, after being murdered. And yet, such is the power of instruction and example, although not satisfied, as many around me seemed to be, that this was all righteous and proper, I sometimes was inclined to believe it, for the priests could do no sin. Among the first instructions I received from the Superior, one was to admit priests into the Nunnery, from the street, at irregular hours. It is no secret that priests enter and go out; but if they were to be watched by any person in St. Paul's street all day long, no irregularity might be suspected; and they might be supposed to visit the Convent for the performance of religious ceremonies merely.

But if a person were near the gate about midnight, he

might form a different opinion; for when a stray priest is shut out of the Seminary, or is put in the need of seeking a lodging, he is sure of being admitted into the Black Nunnery. Nobody but the priest can ring the bell at the sick-room door; much less can any but a priest gain admittance. The pull of the bell is entirely concealed on the outside of the gate.

He makes himself known as a priest by a hissing sound, made by the tongue against the teeth while they are kept closed and the lips open. The nun within, who delays to open the door until informed who is there, immediately recognizes the signal, and replies with two inarticulate sounds, such as are often used instead of yes, with the mouth closed.

The Superior considered this part of my instructions important, and taught me the signals. I had often occasion to use them; I have been repeatedly called to the door, in the night, while watching in the sick-room; and on reaching it, heard the hissing sound, then according to my orders, unfastened the door, admitted a priest, who was at liberty to go where he pleased. I will name M. Bierze, from St. Denis.

The books used in the nunnery, such as I recollect of them, were the following. Most of these are lecture books, such as are used by the daily readers, while we were at work and meals. These were all furnished by the Superior, out of her library, to which we never had access. When we had done with the book, it was exchanged for another, as she pleased to select. *La Miroir de Chrétien* (Christian Mirror), *History of Rome*, *History of the Church*, *Life of Sœur Bourgeoise*, (the founder of the Convent), in two volumes, *L'Ange Conducteur* (the Guardian Angel), *L'Ange Chrétien* (the Christian Angel), *Les Vies des Saints* (Lives of the Saints), in several volumes; *Dialogues*, a volume consisting of conversations between a Protestant Doctor, called Dr. D., and a Catholic gentleman, on the articles of faith, in which, after much ingenious reasoning, the

former was confuted; one large book, the name I have forgotten, occupied us nine or ten months at our lectures, night and morning; *L'Instruction de la Jeunesse* (the *Instruction of Youth*), containing much about Convents, and the education of persons in the world, with a great deal on confession, &c. *Examen de la Conscience* (*Examination of Conscience*), is a book frequently used.

I never saw a Bible in the Convent from the day I entered as a novice, until that on which I effected my escape. The Catholic New Testament, commonly called the *Evangile*, was read to us three or four times a year. The Superior directed the reader what passages to select; but we never had it in our hands to read when we pleased. I often heard the Protestant Bible spoken of in bitter terms, as a most dangerous book, and which never ought to be in the hands of common people.

---

## CHAPTER X.

## OCCUPATION AND SUPERSTITIONS.

LARGE quantities of bread are made in the Black Nunnery every week; for besides what is necessary to feed the nuns, many of the poor are supplied. When a priest wishes to give a loaf of bread to a poor person, he gives him an order, which is presented at the Convent. The making of bread is the most laborious employment in the institution.

The manufacture of wax candles was another important branch of business in the nunnery. It was carried on in a small room, on the first floor, called the ciergerie, or wax room, cierge being the French word for wax. I was sometimes sent to read the daily lecture and catechism, but found it a very unpleasant task, as the smell rising from the melted wax gave me a sickness at the stomach. The employment was considered unhealthy, and those were assigned to it who had the strongest constitutions. The nuns who were more commonly employed in that room, were Saint Maria, Saint Catherine, Saint Charlotte, Saint Frances, Saint Hyacinthe, Saint Hypolite, and others. But with these, as with others in the Convent, I was never allowed to speak, except under circumstances before mentioned. I was sent to read and was not allowed to answer the most trivial question, if one were asked. Should a nun say, "What o'clock is it?" I never dared to reply, but was required to report her to the Superior.

Much stress was laid on the *sainte scapulaire*, or holy scapulare. This is a small band of cloth or silk, formed in a particular manner, to be tied around the neck, by two strings, fastened to the ends. I have made many of them; having been set to make them to

the Convent. On one side is marked a double cross (thus, + +) and on the other I.H.S. Such a band is called a scapulary, and many miracles are attributed to its power. Children on first receiving the communion are often presented with scapularies, which they are taught to regard with great reverence. We were told of the wonders effected by their means, in the addresses made to us, by priests, at catechism or lectures. I will repeat one or two of the stories.

A Roman Catholic servant woman, who had concealed some of her sins at confession, acted so hypocritical a part as to make her mistress believe her a *devotee*, or strict observer of her duty. She even imposed upon her confessor so that he gave her a scapulary. After he had given it, however, one of the saints in heaven informed him in a vision, that the holy scapulary must not remain on the neck of so great a sinner, and that it must be restored to the church. She lay down that night with the scapulary round her throat; but in the morning was found dead, with her head cut off, and the scapulary was discovered in the church. The belief was that the devil could not endure to have so holy a thing on one of his servants, and had pulled so hard to get it off, as to draw the silken thread with which it was tied, through her neck; after which, by some divine power, it was restored to the church.

Another story. A poor Roman Catholic was once taken a prisoner by the heretics. He had a *saints scapulaire* on his neck, when God, seeing him in the midst of his foes, took it from the neck by a miracle, and held it up in the air above the throng of heretics; one hundred of whom were converted, by seeing it thus supernaturally suspended.

I had been informed that there was a subterraneous passage, leading from the cellar of our Convent, into the Congregational Nunnery; but, though I had so often visited the cellar, I had never seen it. One day, after I had been received three or four months, I was sent to

walk through it on my knees with another nun, as a penance. This, and other penances, were sometimes put upon us by the priests, without any reason assigned. The common way was to tell us of the sin for which a penance was imposed, but we were left many times to conjecture. Now and then the priest would inform us at the subsequent confession, when he happened to recollect something about it, as I thought, and not because he reflected or cared much upon the subject.

The nun who was with me led through the cellar, passing to the right of the secret burial place, and showed me the door of the subterraneous passage, which was towards the Congregational Nunnery. The reasons why I had not noticed it before, were, that it was made to shut close and even with the wall; and that part of the cellar was whitewashed. The door opens with a latch into a passage about four feet and a half high. We got upon our knees, commenced saying the prayers required, and began to move slowly along the dark and narrow passage. It may be fifty or sixty feet in length. When we reached the end, we opened the door, and found ourselves in the cellar of the Congregational Nunnery, at some distance from the outer wall. By the side of the door was placed a list of names of the Black Nuns, with a slide that might be drawn over any of them. We covered our names in this manner, as evidence of having performed the duty assigned to us; and then returned downwards on our knees, by the way we had come. This penance I repeatedly performed afterwards; and by this way, nuns from the Congregational Nunnery sometimes entered our Convent for worse purposes.

We were frequently assured that miracles are still performed; and pains were taken to impress us deeply on this subject. The superior often spoke to us of the Virgin Mary's pincushion, the remains of which are preserved in the Convent, though it has crumbled quite to dust. We regarded this relic with such veneration,

that we were afraid even to look at it, and we often heard the following story related, when the subject was introduced.

A priest in Jerusalem had a vision, when he was informed that the house in which the Virgin had lived, should be removed from its foundations, and transported to a distance. He did not think the communication was from God, and disregarded it, but the house was soon after missed, which convinced him that the vision was true, and he told where the house might be found. A picture of the house is preserved in the Nunnery, and was shown us. There are also wax figures of Joseph sawing wood, and Jesus, as a child, picking up the chips. We were taught to sing a song relating to this, the chorus of which I remember:

*“Saint Joseph carpentier,  
Petit Jesus ramassait les copeaux  
Pour faire bouillir la marmite!”*

(St. Joseph was a carpenter, little Jesus collected chips to make the pot boil!) I recollect a story about a family in Italy saved from shipwreck by a priest, who were in consequence converted, and had two sons honoured with the priest's office.

I had heard, before I entered the Convent, about a great fire which had destroyed a number of houses in the Quebec suburbs, and which some said the Bishop extinguished with holy water. I once heard a Catholic and a Protestant disputing on this subject, and when I went to the Congregational Nunnery, I sometimes heard the children, alluding to the same story, say at an alarm of fire, “Is it a Catholic fire? Then why does not the Bishop run?”

Among the topics on which the Bishop addressed the nuns in the Convent, this was one. He told us the story one day, that he could have sooner interferred and stopped the flames, but that at last, finding

they were about to destroy too many Catholic houses, he threw holy water on the fire, and extinguished it. I believed this, and also thought that he was able to put out any fire.

The holy water which the Bishop has consecrated, was considered more efficacious than any blessed by a priest: and this it was which was used in the Convent in sprinkling our beds. It has virtue in it, to keep off any evil spirit.

Now that I was a nun, I was sent to read lectures to the novices, as other nuns had been while I was a novice. There were but few of us who were thought capable of reading English well enough, and, therefore, I was more frequently sent than I might otherwise have been. The Superior often said to me, as I was going: "Try to convert them—save their souls—you know you will have a higher place in heaven for every one you convert."

For whatever reason, Mad Jane Ray seemed to take great delight in crossing and provoking the Superior and old nuns: and often she would cause an interruption when it was most displeasing to them. The preservation of silence was insisted upon most rigidly, and penances of such a nature were imposed for breaking it, that it was a constant source of uneasiness with me, to know that I might infringe the rules in so many ways, and that inattention might at any moment subject me to them. During the periods of meditation, and those of lecture, work, and repose, I kept a strict guard upon myself, to escape penances, as well as to avoid sin: and the silence of the others convinced me that they were equally watchful from the same motives.

My feelings, however, varied at different times, and so did those of many of my companions, excepting the older ones, who took their turns in watching us. We sometimes felt disposed for gaiety, and threw off all idea that talking was sinful, even when required

by the rules of the Convent. I even, when I felt that I might perhaps be doing wrong, reflected that confession, and penance, would soon wipe off the guilt.

But I soon found out several things important to be known to a person living under such rules. First, that it was better to confess to a priest a sin committed against the rules, because he would not require the penance I most disliked, viz., those which exposed me to the observation of the nuns, or which demanded self-abasement before them, like begging their pardon, kissing the floor or the Superior's feet, &c., for, as a confessor he was bound to secrecy, and could not inform the Superior against me. My conscience being as effectually unburdened by my confession to the priest, I preferred not to tell my sins to anyone else: and this course was preferred by others for the same good reasons. To Jane Ray, however, it appeared to be a matter of indifference who knew her violations of rule, and to what penance she exposed herself.

Often while perfect silence prevailed among the nuns, at meditation, or while nothing was heard except the voice of the reader for the day, no matter whose life or writings were presented for our contemplation, Jane would break forth with some remark or question, that would attract general attention, and often cause a long and total interruption. Sometimes she would make some harmless remark or inquiry aloud, as if through mere inadvertency, and then her loud and well known voice, would arrest the attention of us all, and incline us to laugh. The Superior usually uttered a hasty remonstrance, or pronounced some penance upon her; but Jane had ever some apology ready, or some reply calculated to irritate more, or to prove that no punishment would be effectual on her. Sometimes she appeared to be actuated by opposite feelings and motives; for though she delighted in drawing others into difficulty, and has thrown severe

penances upon her favourites, on other occasions she was regardless of consequences herself, and preferred to take all the blame, to shield others. I have often known her to break silence in the community, as if she had no object beyond that of causing disturbance, or exciting a smile, and as soon as it was noticed, exclaim, "Say it's me, say it's me!" Sometimes she would expose herself to punishment in place of another who was guilty; and thus I found it difficult to understand her. In some cases she seemed out of her wits, as the Superior and priests commonly represented her; but generally I saw in her what prevented me from accounting her insane.

Once she gave me the name of the "Devout English Reader," because I was often appointed to read the lecture to the English girls; and sometimes, sitting near me under pretence of deafness, would whisper it in my hearing, for she knew my want of self-command when excited to laughter. Thus she often exposed me to penances for a breach of decorum, and set me to biting my lips, to avoid laughing outright in the midst of a solemn lecture. "Oh! you devout English reader!" she would say, with something so ludicrous, that I had to exert myself to the utmost to avoid observation.

This came so often at one time that I grew uneasy, and told her I must confess it, to unburden my conscience. Sometimes she would pass behind us as we stood at dinner ready to sit down, and softly moving back our chairs, leaving us to fall down upon the floor, and while we were laughing together, she would spring forward, kneel to the Superior, and beg her pardon and a penance.

## CHAPTER XI.

## DEATH SENTENCE.

I MUST now come to a deed in which I had some part, and which I look back upon with great horror and pain. In it I was not the principal sufferer. It is not necessary to attempt to excuse myself in this or any other case. Those who judge fairly, will make allowances for me, under the fear and force, the command and examples, before me. It was about five months after I took the veil, the weather was cool, perhaps in October. One day the Superior sent for me and several other nuns, to receive her commands. We found the Bishop and some priests with her; and speaking in an unusual tone of fierceness and authority, she said, "Go to the room for the Examination of Conscience, and drag St. Frances up stairs." A command so unusual, with her tone and manner, excited in me the most gloomy anticipations. It did not strike me as strange that St. Frances should be in the room to which the Superior directed us; an apartment to which we were often sent to prepare for the communion, and to which we voluntarily went, whenever we felt the compunctions which our ignorance of duty, and the misinstructions we received, inclined us to seek relief from self-reproach. I had seen her there a little before. What terrified me was, first, the Superior's angry manner; second, the expression she used, a French term, whose meaning is rather softened when translated into *drag*; third, the place to which we were directed to take the interesting young nun, and the

persons assembled there, as I supposed to condemn her. My fears were such, concerning the fate that awaited her, and my horror at the idea that she was in some way to be sacrificed, that I would have given anything to be allowed to stay where I was. But I feared the effects of disobeying the Superior, and proceeded with the rest towards the room for the examination of conscience.

The room was in the second story, and the place of many a scene of a shameful nature. It is sufficient to say, that things had there occurred which made me regard the place with the greatest disgust. Saint Frances had appeared melancholy for some time. I knew that she had cause, for she had been repeatedly subject to trials which I need not name—our common lot. When we reached her room, I entered the door, my companions standing behind me, as the place was so small as hardly to hold five persons at a time. The young nun was standing alone, near the middle of the room; she was probably about twenty, with light hair, blue eyes, and a very fair complexion. I spoke to her in a compassionate voice, but with such a decided manner, that she comprehended my full meaning. "Saint Frances, we are sent for you."

Several others spoke kindly to her, but two addressed her very harshly. The poor creature turned round with a look of meekness, and without expressing any unwillingness or fear, without even speaking a word, resigned herself to our hands. The tears came into my eyes. I had not a doubt that she considered her fate was sealed, and was already beyond the fear of death. She was conducted to the staircase, and then seized by her limbs and clothes and almost dragged up stairs. I laid my own hands upon her—I took hold of her, too, more gently, indeed, than some of the rest; yet I assisted them in carrying her. I could not avoid it. My refusal would not have saved her, nor prevented her being carried up; it would only have exposed me to

some severe punishment, as some of my companions would have complained of me. All the way up the staircase, Saint Frances spoke not a word, nor made the slightest resistance. When we entered the room to which she was ordered, my heart sunk within me. The Bishop, the Lady Superior, and five priests, viz.: Bonin, Richards, Savage, and two others, were assembled for trial, on some charge of great importance.

Father Richards questioned her, and she made ready, but calm replies. I cannot give a connected account of what ensued: my feelings were wrought up to such a pitch, that I knew not what I did. I was under a terrible apprehension that, if I betrayed my feelings I should fall under the displeasure of the cold-blooded persecutors of my poor innocent sister; and this fear and the distress I felt for her, rendered me almost frantic. As soon as I entered the room, I stepped into a corner, on the left of the entrance, where I might partially support myself by leaning against the wall. This support prevented me falling to the floor; for the confusion of my thoughts was so great, that only a few of the words I heard made any lasting impression upon me. I felt as if death would not have been more frightful to me. I am inclined to think that Father Richards wished to shield the poor prisoner from the severity of her fate, by drawing from her expressions that might bear a favourable construction. He asked her, among other things, if she was not now sorry for what she had been overheard to say, (she had been betrayed in by a nun,) and if she would not prefer confinement in the cells to the punishment threatened. But the Bishop soon interrupted him, and it was easy to perceive, that he was determined she should not escape. In reply to some of the questions she was silent; to others I heard her reply that she did not repent of the words she had uttered, though they had been reported by some of the nuns who had heard them; that she had firmly resolved to resist every

attempt to compel her to the commission of crimes which she detested. She added that she would rather die than cause the murder of harmless babes. "That is enough, finish her!" said the Bishop.

Two nuns instantly fell upon her, and in obedience to directions, given by the Superior, prepared to execute her sentence. She still maintained all the calmness and submission of a lamb. Some of those who took part in this transaction, I believe, were as unwilling as myself; but others delighted in it. Their conduct exhibited a most bloodthirsty spirit. But above all human fiends I ever saw, Saint Hypolite was the most diabolical; she engaged in the horrid task with all alacrity, and assumed from choice the most revolting parts to be performed. She seized a gag, forced it into the mouth of the poor nun, and when it was fixed between her extended jaws, so as to keep them open at their greatest possible distance, took hold of the straps fastened at each end of the stick, crossed them behind the helpless head of the victim, and drew them tight through the loop prepared as a fastening.

The bed which had always stood in one part of the room, still remained there; though the muslin screen, which had been placed before it, with only a crevice through which a person behind might look out, had been folded up on its hinges in the form of a W., and placed in a corner. On the bed the prisoner was laid with her face upward, and then bound with cords so that she could not move. In an instant, another bed was thrown upon her. One of the priests, named Bonin, sprung like a fury first upon it, with all his force. He was speedily followed by the nuns, until there were as many upon the bed as could find room, and all did what they could, not only to smother, but to bruise her. Some stood up and jumped upon the poor girl with their feet, some with their knees: and others, in different ways seemed to seek how

they might best beat the breath out of her body, and mangle it, without coming in direct contact with it, or seeing the effects of their violence. During this time my feelings were almost too strong to be endured. I felt stupefied, and scarcely was conscious of what I did. Still fear for myself induced me to some exertion; and I attempted to talk to those who stood next, partly that I might have an excuse for turning away from the dreadful scene.

After the lapse of fifteen or twenty minutes, and when it was presumed that the sufferer had been smothered and crushed to death, Father Bonin and the nuns ceased to trample upon her, and stepped from the bed. All was motionless and silent beneath it. They then began to laugh at such inhuman thoughts as occurred to some of them, rallying each other in the most unfeeling manner, and ridiculing me for feelings which I in vain endeavoured to conceal. They alluded to the resignation of our murdered companion; and one of them tauntingly said, "She would have made a good Catholic martyr." Then one of them asked if the corpse should be removed. The Superior said it had better remain a little while. After waiting a short time, the feather-bed was taken off, the cords unloosed, and the body taken by the nuns and dragged down stairs into the cellar, and thrown into the hole which I have already described, covered with a great quantity of lime; and afterwards sprinkled with a liquid, of the properties and name of which I am ignorant. This liquid I have seen poured into the hole from large bottles, after the necks were broken off; and have heard that it is used in France to prevent the effluvia rising from cemeteries.

I did not soon recover from the shock caused by this scene; it still recurs to me, with most gloomy impressions. The next day there was a melancholy aspect over everything, and recreation time passed in the dullest manner; scarcely anything was said above a

whisper. I never heard much said afterwards about Saint Frances.

I spoke with one of the nuns a few words, one day, but we were all cautioned not to expose ourselves very far, and could not place much reliance in each other. The murdered nun had been brought to her shocking end through the treachery of one of our number in whom she confided. I never knew with certainty who had reported her remarks to the Superior, but suspicion fastened on one, and I never could regard her but with detestation. I was more inclined to blame her than some of those employed in the execution; for there could have been no necessity for the betrayal of her feelings.

I was often sent by the Superior to overhear what was said by novices and nuns, when they seemed to shun her: she would say, "Go and listen, they are speaking English;" and though I obeyed her, I never informed her against them. If I wished to clear my conscience, I would go to a priest and confess, knowing that he dared not communicate what I said to any person, and that he would not choose as heavy penances as the Superior.

We were allowed to choose another confessor when we had any sin to confess, which we were unwilling to tell one to whom we should otherwise have done. Not long after the murder a young woman came to the nunnery, and asked for permission to see Saint Frances. It was my former friend, with whom I had been an assistant teacher, Miss Louisa Bousquet, of St. Denia. From this I supposed the murdered nun might have come from that town, or its vicinity. The only answer was, that St. Frances was dead. Afterwards some of St. Frances' friends called to inquire after her, and they were told that she died a glorious death, and had made some heavenly expressions, which were repeated in order to satisfy her friends.

## CHAPTER XII.

## RIDICULING PRIESTS.

THE pictures in the room of the three States were large, and painted by an artist who knew how to make horrible ones. They appeared to be stuck to the walls. The light is admitted from small high windows, curtained, so as to make everything look gloomy. They told us that they were painted by an artist, to whom God had given power to represent things exactly as they appeared in heaven, hell, and purgatory.

In heaven, the picture of which hangs on one side of the apartment, multitudes of nuns and priests are put in the highest places, with the Virgin Mary at their head, St. Peter and other saints, far above the great numbers of good Catholics of other classes, who are crowded in below.

In purgatory are multitudes of people; and in one part, called "*The place of lambs*," are infants who died unbaptized. "*The place of darkness*" is that part of purgatory in which adults are collected, there they are surrounded by flames, waiting to be delivered by the prayers of the living.

In the picture of hell the faces were the most horrible that can be imagined. Persons of different descriptions were represented, with the most distorted features, ghastly complexions, and every variety of dreadful expression: some with wild beasts gnawing at their heads, others furiously biting the iron bars which kept them in, with looks which could not fail to make a spectator shudder.

I could hardly persuade myself that the figures

were not living, and the impression they made on my feelings was powerful. I was often shown the place where nuns go who break their vows, as a warning. It is the hottest place in hell, and worse than that to which Protestants are assigned; because they are not so much to be blamed, as we were assured, as their ministers and the Bible, by which they are perverted. Whenever I was shut in that room, as I was several times, I prayed for "les âmes des fidèles trespasses;" the souls of those faithful ones who have long been in purgatory, and have no relation living to pray for them. My feelings were of the most painful description, while I was alone with those frightful pictures.

Jane Ray was once put in and uttered the most dreadful shrieks. Some of the old nuns proposed to the Superior to have her gagged; "No," she replied, "go and let out that devil, she makes me sin more than all the rest." Jane could not endure the place; and she gave names to many of the worst figures in the pictures. On catechism days she took a seat behind a cupboard door where the priest could not see her, while she faced the nuns, and would make us laugh.

"You are not so attentive to your lesson as you used to be," he would say, while we tried to suppress our laughter.

Jane would then hold up the first letter of some priest's name whom she had before compared with one of the faces in "hell," and so look that we could hardly preserve our gravity. I remember she named the wretch who was biting at the bars of hell, with a serpent gnawing his head, with chains and padlocks on, Father Dufresne; and she would say—

"Does he not look like him, when he comes in to catechism with his long solemn face, and begins his speeches with, 'My children, my hope is that you have lived very devout lives?'"

The first time I went to confession after taking the

veil, I found abundant evidence that the priests did not treat even that ceremony, which is called a solemn sacrament, with respect enough to lay aside the shameless character they so often showed on other occasions. The confessor sometimes sat in the room for the examination of conscience, and sometimes in the Superior's room, and always alone except the nun who was confessing. He had a common chair placed in the middle of the floor, and instead of being placed behind a grate, or lattice, as in the chapel, had nothing before or around him.

A number of nuns usually confessed on the same day, but only one could be admitted into the room at a time. They took their places just without the door, on their knees, and went through the preparation prescribed by the rules of confession; repeating certain prayers, which occupy a considerable time. When one was ready, she rose from her knees, entered, and closed the door behind her; and no one dared touch the latch until she came out.

I shall not tell what was transacted at such times, under the pretence of confessing, and receiving absolution from sin; far more sin was often incurred than pardon; and crimes of a deep dye were committed, while trifling irregularities in childish ceremonies, were treated as serious offences. I cannot persuade myself to speak plainly on such a subject, as I must offend the virtuous ear. I can only say, that suspicion cannot do any injustice to the priests, because their sins cannot be exaggerated.

Some idea may be formed of the manner in which even such women as many of my sister nuns, regarded the father confessors, when I state that there was often a contest among us, to avoid entering the apartment as long as we could; endeavouring to make each other go first, as that was what most of us dreaded.

During the long and tedious days which filled up

the time between the occurrences I have mentioned, nothing or little took place to keep up our spirits. We were fatigued in body with labour, or with sitting, debilitated by the long continuance of our religious exercises, and depressed in feelings by our miserable and hopeless condition. Nothing but the humours of mad Jane Ray could rouse us for a moment from our languor and melancholy.

To mention all her devices, would require more room than is here allowed, and a memory of almost all her words and actions for years. I had early become a favourite with her, and had opportunity to learn more of her character than most of the other nuns. As this may be learned from hearing what she did, I will here recount a few of her tricks, just as they happen to present themselves to my memory, without regard to the order of time.

She one day, in an unaccountable humour, sprinkled the floor plentifully with holy water, which brought upon her a severe lecture from the Superior, as might have been expected. The Superior said it was a heinous offence: she had wasted holy water enough to save many souls from purgatory: and what would they not give for it! She then ordered Jane to sit in the middle of the floor, and when the priest came, he was informed of her offence. Instead, however, of imposing one of those penances to which she had been subjected, but with so little effect, he said to her,—

“ Go to your place, Jane; we forgive you this time.”

I was once set to iron aprons with Jane; aprons and pocket handkerchiefs are the only articles of dress which are ever ironed in the Convent. As soon as we were alone, she remarked:

“ Well, we are free from the rules, while we are at this work;” and, although she knew she had no reason for saying so, she began to sing, and I soon joined her, and thus we spent the time, while we were at

work, to the neglect of the prayers we ought to have said.

We had no idea that we were in danger of being overheard, but it happened that the Superior was overhead all the time, with several nuns, who were preparing for confession; she came down and said—

“How is this?”

Jane Ray coolly replied that we had employed our time in singing hymns, and referred to me. I was afraid to confirm so direct a falsehood, in order to deceive the Superior, though I had often told more injurious ones of her fabrication, or at her orders, and said very little in reply to Jane's request.

The Superior plainly saw the trick that was attempted, and ordered us both to the room for the examination of conscience, where we remained till night, without a mouthful to eat. The time was not, however, unoccupied; I received such a lecture from Jane as I have very seldom heard, and she was so angry with me, that we did not speak to each other for two weeks.

At length she found something to complain of against me, had me subjected to a penance, which led to our begging each other's pardon, and we became perfectly satisfied, reconciled, and as good friends as ever.

One of the most disgusting penances we had ever to submit to, was that of drinking the water in which the Superior had washed her feet. Nobody could ever laugh at this penance except Jane Ray. She would pretend to comfort us, by saying she was sure it was better than mere plain clear water.

Some of the tricks which I remember, were played by Jane with nuns' clothes. It was a rule that the oldest aprons in use should go to the youngest received, and that the old nuns were to wear all the new ones. On four different occasions, Jane stole into the sleeping room at night, and unobserved by the watch, changed

a great part of the aprons, placing them by the beds of nuns to whom they did not belong. The consequence was, that in the morning they dressed themselves in such haste, as never to discover the mistake they made, until they were all ranged at prayers ; and then the ridiculous appearance which many of them cut, disturbed the long devotions. I laugh so easy that, on such occasions, I usually incurred a full share of penances. I generally, however, got a new apron, when Jane played this trick; for it was part of her object to give the best aprons to her favourites, and put off the ragged ones on some of the old nuns whom she most hated.

Jane once lost her pocket-handkerchief. The penance for such an offence is, to go without any for five weeks. For this she had no relish, and requested me to pick one from some of the nuns on the way up stairs. I succeeded in getting two; this Jane said was one too many, and she thought it dangerous for either of us to keep it, lest a search should be made. Very soon the two nuns were complaining that they had lost their handkerchiefs, and wondering what could have become of them, as they were sure they had been careful. Jane seized an opportunity, and slipped one into a straw bed, where it remained until the bed was emptied to be filled with new straw.

As the winter was coming on, one year, she complained to me that we were not as well supplied with warm night-clothes, as two of the nuns she named, whom she said she "abominated." She soon after found means to get possession of their fine warm flannel night-gowns, one of which she gave to me, while the other was put on at bedtime. She presumed the owners would have a secret search for them; and in the morning hid them in the stove, after the fire had gone out, which was kindled a little before the hour of rising, and then suffered to burn down.

This she did every morning, taking them out at

night through the winter. The poor nuns who owned the garments were afraid to complain of their loss, lest they should have some penance laid on them, and nothing was ever said about them. When the weather began to grow warm in the spring, Jane returned the night-gowns to the beds of the nuns from whom she had borrowed them, and they were probably as much surprised to find them again, as they had been before at losing them.

Jane once found an opportunity to fill her apron with a quantity of fine apples called *fameuses*, which came in her way, and hastening up to the sleeping room, hid them under my bed. Then coming down, she informed me, and we agreed to apply for leave to make our elevens, as it is called. The meaning of this is, to repeat a certain round of prayers, for nine days in succession, to some saint we choose to address for assistance in becoming more charitable, affectionate, or something else. We easily obtained permission, and hastened upstairs to begin our nine days' feast on the apples; when, much to our surprise, they had all been taken away, and there was no way to avoid the disagreeable fate we had brought upon ourselves. Jane, therefore, began to search the beds of the other nuns: but not finding any trace of the apples, she became doubly vexed, and stuck pins in those that belonged to her enemies.

When bedtime came, they were much scratched in getting into bed, which made them break silence, and that subjected them to penances.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## JANE RAE'S TRICKS.

ONE night Jane, who had been sweeping the sleeping room for a penance, dressed up the broomstock, when she had completed her work, with a white cloth on the end, so tied as to resemble an old woman dressed in white, with long arms sticking out. This she stuck through a broken pane of glass, and placed it so that it appeared to be looking in at the window, by the font of holy water. There it remained till the nuns came up to bed. The first who stopped at the font, to dip the finger in, caught a glimpse of the singular object, and started with terror. The next was equally terrified, as she approached, and the next, and the next.

We all believed in ghosts; and it was not wonderful that such an object should cause alarm, especially as it was but a short time after the death of one of the nuns. Thus they went on, each getting a fright in turn, yet all afraid to speak. At length, one more alarmed, or with less presence of mind than the rest, exclaimed, "Oh, mon Dieu! je ne me coucherais pas!" When the night watch called out "Who's that?" she confessed she had broken silence, but pointed to the cause; and when all the nuns assembled at a distance from the window, Jane offered to advance boldly, and ascertain the nature of the apparition, which they thought a most resolute intention. We all stood looking on, when she stepped to the window, drew in the broomstick, and showed us the ridiculous puppet which had alarmed so many superstitious fears.

Some of her greatest feats she performed as a sleep-walker. Whether she ever walked in her sleep or not, I am unable, with certainty to say. She, however, often imposed upon the Superior, and old nuns, by making them think so, when I knew she did not; and yet I cannot positively say that she always did. I have remarked that one of the old nuns was always placed in our sleeping-room at night, to watch us. Sometimes she would be inattentive, and sometimes fall into a dose. Jane Ray often seized such times to rise from her bed, and walk about, occasionally seizing one of the nuns in bed, in order to frighten her. This she generally effected; and many times we have been awakened by screams of terror. In our alarm some of us frequently broke silence and gave occasion to the Superior to lay us under penances. Many times, however, we escaped with a mere reprimand, while Jane usually received expressions of compassion: "Poor creature; she would not do so if she were in perfect possession of her reason." And Jane displayed her customary artfulness, in keeping up the false impression. As soon as she perceived that the old nun was likely to observe her, she would throw her arms about, or appear unconscious of what she was doing; falling upon a bed, or standing stock-still, until exertions had been made to rouse her from her supposed lethargy.

We were once allowed to drink cider at dinner, which was quite an extraordinary favour. Jane, however, on account of her negligence of all work, was denied the privilege, which she much resented. The next day, when dinner arrived, we began to taste our new drink, but it was so salt we could not swallow it. Those of us who first discovered it, were as usual afraid to speak; but we set down our cups, and looked around, till the others made the same discovery, which they all soon did, and most of them in the same manner. Some however, at length, taken by surprise, uttered some ludicrous exclamation on tasting the salted cider, and

then an old nun, looking across, would cry out—

“Ah! tu casses la silence.” (Ah! you’ve broken silence.)

And thus we soon got a-laughing beyond our power of supporting it. At recreation that day, the first question asked by many of us was, “How did you like your cider?”

Jane Ray never had a fixed place to sleep in. When the weather began to grow warm in the spring, she usually pushed some bed out of its place, near a window, and put her own beside it; and when the winter approached, she would choose a spot near the stove, and occupy it with her bed, in spite of all remonstrance. We were all convinced that it was generally best to yield to her.

She was often set to work in different ways: but, whenever she was dissatisfied with doing anything would devise some trick that would make the Superior or old nuns drive her off; and whenever any suspicion was expressed of her being in her right mind, she would say that she did not know what she was doing; and all the difficulty arose from her repeating prayers too much, which wearied and distracted her mind.

I was once directed to assist Jane Ray in shifting the beds of the nuns. When we came to those of some of the sisters whom she most disliked, she said, now we will pay them for some of the penances we have suffered on their account; and taking some thistles she mixed them with the straw. At night, the first of them that got into bed felt the thistles, and cried out. The night-watch exclaimed, as usual, “you are breaking silence there.” And then another screamed as she was scratched by the thistles, and another. The old nun then called on all who had broken silence to rise, and ordered them to sleep under their beds as a penance, which they silently complied with. Jane and I afterwards confessed, when it was all over, and took some trifling penance which the priest imposed.

Those nuns who fell most under the displeasure of mad Jane Ray, as I have intimated before, were those who had the reputation of being most ready to inform of the most trifling faults of others, and especially those who acted without any regard to honour, by disclosing what they had pretended to listen to in confidence. Several of the worst-tempered "saints" she held in abhorrence; and I have heard her say, that such and such she abominated. Many a trick did she play upon these, some of which were painful to them in their consequences, and a good number of them have never been traced to this day.

Of all the nuns, however, none other was regarded by her with so much detestation as St. Hypolite; for she was always believed to have betrayed St. Frances, and to have caused her murder. She was looked upon by us as the voluntary cause of her death, and of the crime which those of us committed, who unwillingly, took part in her execution. We, on the contrary, being under the worst of fears for ourselves, in case of refusing to obey our masters and mistress, thought ourselves chargeable with less guilt, as unwilling assistants in a scene which it was impossible for us to prevent or delay. Jane has often spoken with me of the suspected informer, and always in terms of the greatest bitterness.

The Superior sometimes expressed commiseration for mad Jane Ray, but I never could tell whether she really believed her insane or not. I was always inclined to think, that she was willing to put up with some of her tricks, because they served to divert our minds from the painful and depressing circumstances in which we were placed. I knew the Superior's powers and habits of deception also, and that she would deceive us as willingly as any one else.

Sometimes she proposed to send Jane to St. Anne's, a place near Quebec, celebrated for the pilgrimage

posed that some peculiar virtue exists there, which will be made to it by persons differently afflicted. It is reported that St. Anne's has the power to restore health to the sick, and I have heard stories told in corroboration of the common belief. Many lame and blind persons, with others, visit St. Anne's every year, some of whom may be seen travelling on foot, and begging their food. The Superior would sometimes say that it was a pity that a woman like Jane Ray, capable of being so useful, should be unable to do her duties, in consequence of a malady which she thought might be cured by a visit to St. Anne's.

Yet to St. Anne's Jane was never sent, and her wild and various tricks continued as before. The rules of silence, which the others were so scrupulous in observing, she set at nought every hour ; and as for other rules, she regarded them with as little respect when they stood in her way. She would now and then step out and stop the clock by which our exercises were regulated, and sometimes in this manner lengthened out our recreation till near twelve. At last the old nuns began to watch against such a trick, and would occasionally go out to see if the clock was going.

She once made a request that she might not eat with the other nuns, which was granted, as it seemed to proceed from a spirit of genuine humility, which made her regard herself as unworthy of our society.

It being most convenient, she was sent to the Superior's table, to make her meals after her ; and it did not at first occur to the Superior that Jane, in this manner, profited by the change, by getting much better food than the rest of us. Thus there seemed to be always something deeper than anybody at first suspected at the bottom of everything she did.

She was once directed to sweep a community-room, under the sleeping-chamber. This office had before been assigned to the other nuns, as a penance ; but the Superior, considering that Jane Ray did little or noth-

ing, determined thus to furnish her with some employment.

She declared to us that she would not sweep it long, as we might soon be assured. It happened that the stove by which the community-room was warmed in the winter, had its pipe carried through the floor of our sleeping chamber, and thence across it in the direction opposite that in which the pipe of our stove was carried. It being then warm weather, the hole was left unstopped. After we had all retired to our beds, and while engaged in our silent prayers, we were suddenly alarmed by a bright blaze of fire, which burst from the hole in the floor, and threw sparks all around us. We thought the building was burning, and uttered cries of terror, regardless of the penances, the fear of which generally kept us silent.

The utmost confusion prevailed; for although we had solemnly vowed never to flee from the Convent even if it was on fire, we were extremely alarmed, and could not repress our feelings. We soon learnt the cause, for the flames ceased in a moment or two, and it was found that mad Jane, after sweeping a little in the room beneath, had struck a quantity of wet powder on the end of her broom, thrust it up through the hole in the ceiling into our apartment, and with a lighted paper set it on fire.

The date of this alarm I must refer to a time soon after that of the election riots; for I recollect that she found means to get possession of some of the powder which was prepared at that time for an emergency to which some thought that the Convent was exposed.

She once asked for pen and paper, and then the Superior told her if she wrote to her friends she must see it. She replied that it was for no such purpose; she wanted to write her confession, and thus make it once for all. She wrote it, handed it to the priest, and

he gave it to the Superior, who read it to us. It was full of offences which she had never committed, evidently written to throw ridicule on confessions, and one of the most ludicrous productions I ever saw.

Our bedsteads were made with very narrow boards laid across them, on which the beds were laid. One day, while we were in the bedchambers together, she proposed that we should misplace these boards. This was done, so that at night nearly a dozen nuns fell down upon the floor on getting into bed. A good deal of confusion naturally ensued, but the authors were not discovered. I was so conscience-stricken, however, that a week afterwards, while we were examining our consciences together, I told her I must confess the sin the next day. She replied,—

“ Do as you like, but you will be sorry for it.”

The next day, when we came before the Superior, I was just going to kneel and confess, when Jane, almost without giving me time to shut the door, threw herself at the Superior’s feet and confessed the trick, and a penance was immediately laid upon me for the sin I had concealed.

There was an old nun who was a famous talker, whom we used to call La Mere (Mother). One night, Jane Ray got up, and secretly changed the caps of several of the nuns; and hers among the rest. In the morning there was great confusion, and such a scene seldom occurred. She was severely blamed by La Mere, having been informed against by some of the nuns: and at last became so much enraged, that she attacked the old woman, and even took her by the throat. La Mere called on all present to come to her assistance, and several nuns interfered. Jane seized the opportunity afforded in the confusion, to beat some of her worst enemies quite severely, and then afterwards said that she had intended to kill some of the rascally informers.

For a time Jane made us laugh so much at prayers.

that the Superior forbade her going down with us at morning prayers; and she took the opportunity to sleep in the morning. When this was found out, she was forbidden to get into her bed again after leaving it, and then she would creep under it and take a nap on the floor. This she told us of one day, but threatened us if we ever betrayed her. At length she was missed at breakfast, as she would sometimes oversleep herself, and the Superior began to be more strict, and always inquired, in the morning, whether Jane Ray was in her place.

When the question was general none of us answered; but when it was addressed to some nun near her by name, as,—

“Saint Eustace, is Jane Ray in her place?” then we had to reply.

Of all the scenes that occurred during my stay in the Convent, there was none which excited the delight of Jane more than one which took place in the chapel one day at mass, though I never had any particular reason to suppose that she had brought it about.

Some person unknown to me to this day had put some substance or other, of a most nauseous smell, into the hat of a little boy, who attended at the altar, and he, without observing the trick, put it upon his head. In the midst of the ceremonies he approached some of the nuns, who were almost suffocated with the odour; and as he occasionally moved from place to place, some of them began to beckon to him to stand further off and to hold their noses, with looks of disgust. The boy was quite unconscious of the cause of the difficulty, and paid them no attention, but the confusion soon became so great through the distress of some, and the laughing of others, that the Superior noticed the circumstance, and beckoned to the boy to withdraw.

All attempts, however, to engage us in any work, prayer, or meditation, were found ineffectual. When-

ever the circumstances in the chapel came to mind, we would laugh out. We had got into such a state, that we could not easily restrain ourselves. The Superior, yielding to necessity, allowed us recreation for the whole day.

The Superior used sometimes to send Jane to instruct the novices in their English prayers. She would proceed to the task with all seriousness; but sometimes chose the most ridiculous, as well as irreverent passages from the songs, and other things, which she had sometimes learned, which would set us, who understood her, laughing. One of her rhymes, I recollect, began with—

“The Lord of love—look from above,  
Upon this turkey hen!”

Jane for a time slept opposite me, and often in the night would rise, unobserved, and slip into my bed, to talk with me, which she did in a low whisper, and return again with equal caution.

She would tell me of the tricks she had played, and such as she meditated, and sometimes make me laugh so loud, that I had much to do in the morning with begging pardons and doing penances.

One winter's day she was sent to light a fire; but after she had done so, remarked privately to some of us, “my fingers were so cold—you'll see if I do it again.”

The next day there was a great stir in the house, because it was said that mad Jane Ray had been seized with a fit while making a fire, and she was taken up apparently insensible, and conveyed to her bed. She complained to me, who visited her in the course of the day, that she was likely to starve, as food was denied her; and I was persuaded to pin a stocking under my dress, and secretly put food into it from the table. This I afterwards carried to her, and relieved her wants.

One of the things which I had blamed Jane most for

was a disposition to quarrel with any nun who seemed to be winning the favor of the Superior. She would never rest until she had brought such a one into some difficulty.

We were allowed but little soap; and Jane, when she found her supply nearly gone, would take the first piece she could find. One day there was a general search made for a large piece that was missed; when, soon after I had been searched, Jane Ray passed me, and slipped it into my pocket; she soon after was searched herself, and then secretly came for it again.

While I recall these particulars of our Nunnery, and refer so often to the conduct and language of one of the nuns, I cannot speak of some things which I believed or suspected, on account of my want of sufficient knowledge. But it is a pity you have not Jane Ray for a witness: she knew many things of which I am ignorant. She must be in possession of facts that should be known. Her long residence in the Convent, her habits of roaming about it, and of observing everything, must have made her acquainted with things which would be heard with interest. I always felt as if she knew everything. She would often go and listen, or look through the cracks into the Superior's room, while any of the priests were closeted with her, and sometimes would come and tell me what she witnessed. I felt myself bound to confess on such occasions, and always did so.

She knew, however, that I only told it to the priest or to the Superior, and without mentioning the name of my informant, which I was at liberty to withhold, so that she was not found out. I often said to her, "Don't tell me, Jane, for I must confess it." She would reply, "It is better for you to confess it than for me." I thus became, even against my will, informed of scenes supposed by the actors of them to be secret.

Jane Ray once persuaded me to accompany her into the Superior's room, to hide with her under the sofa,

and await the appearance of a visitor whom she expected, that we might over-hear what passed between them. We had been long concealed, when the Superior came in alone, and sat for some time; when, fearing she might detect us in the stillness which prevailed, we began to repent of our temerity. At length, however, she suddenly withdrew, and thus afforded us a welcome opportunity to escape.

I was passing one day through a part of the cellar, where I had not often occasion to go, when the toe of my shoe hit something. I tripped and fell down, I rose again, and holding my lamp to see what had caused my fall, I found an iron ring, fastened to a small square trap-door. This I had the curiosity to rise, and saw four or five steps down, but there was not light enough to see more, and I feared to be noticed by somebody and reported to the Superior; so, closing the door again, I left the spot. At first I could not imagine the use of such a passage; but it afterwards occurred to me that it might open to the subterranean passage to the Seminary; for I never could before account for the appearance of many of the priests, who often appeared and disappeared among us, particularly at night, when I knew the gates were closed. They could, as I now saw, come up to the door of the Superior's room at any hour; then up the stairs into our sleeping-room, or where they chose. And often they were in our beds before us.

I afterwards ascertained that my conjectures were correct, and that a secret communication was kept up in this manner between these two institutions, at the end towards Notre Dame street, at a considerable depth under ground. I often afterwards met priests in the cellar, when sent there for coals and other articles, as they had to pass up and down the common cellar stairs on their way.

My wearisome daily prayers and labours, my pain of body and depression of mind, which were so much

increased by penances I have suffered, and those which I constantly feared, and the feelings of shame, remorse, and horror, which sometimes arose, brought me to a state which I cannot describe.

In the first place, my frame was enfeebled by the uneasy postures I was required to keep for so long a time during prayers. This alone, I thought, was sufficient to undermine my health and destroy my life. An hour and a half every morning I had to sit on the floor of the community-room, with my feet under me, my body bent forward, and my head hanging on one side, in a posture expressive of great humility, it is true, but very fatiguing to keep for such an unreasonable length of time. Often I found it impossible to avoid falling asleep in this posture which I could do without detection, by bending a little lower than usual. The signal to rise, or the noise made by the rising of the other nuns, then woke me, and I got up with the rest unobserved.

Before we took the posture just described we had to kneel for a long time without bending the body, keeping quite erect, with the exception of the knees only, with the hands together before the breast. This I found the most distressing attitude for me, and never assumed it without feeling a sharp pain in my chest, which I often thought would soon lead me to my grave —that is, to the great common receptacle for the dead under the chapel. And this upright kneeling posture we were obliged to resume as soon as we rose from the half-sitting posture first mentioned, so that I usually felt myself exhausted and near to fainting before the conclusion of the morning services.

I found the meditations extremely tedious, and often did I sink into sleep, while we were all seated in silence on the floor. When required to tell my meditations, as it was thought to be of no great importance what we said, I sometimes found I had nothing to tell but a dream, and told that, which passed off very well.

Jane Ray appeared to be troubled still more than myself with wandering thoughts; and when blamed for them, would reply, "I begin very well; but directly I begin to think of some old friend of mine, and my thoughts go a-wandering from one country to another."

Sometimes I confessed my falling asleep; and often the priests have talked to me about the sin of sleeping in the time of meditation. At last, one of them proposed to me to prick myself with a pin, which is often done, and so rouse myself for a time.

My close confinement in the Convent, and the want of opportunities to breathe the open air, might have proved more injurious to me than they did, had I not been employed a part of my time in more active labours than those of sewing, &c., to which I was chiefly confined. I took part occasionally in some of the heavy work, as washing, &c.

The events which I am now to relate occurred about five months after my admission into the Convent as a nun; but I cannot fix the time with precision, as I knew not of anything that took place in the world about the same period. The circumstances I clearly remember; but as I have elsewhere remarked, we were not accustomed to keep any account of time.

Information was given to us one day, that another novice was to be admitted among us; and we were required to remember and mention her often in our prayers, that she might have faithfulness in the service of her holy spouse. No information was given us concerning her beyond this fact; not a word about her age, name, or nation. On all similar occasions the same course was pursued, and all that the nuns ever learnt concerning one another was what they might discover by being together, and which usually amounted to little or nothing.

When the day of her admission arrived, though I did not witness the ceremony in the chapel, it was a grati-

cation to us all on one account, because we were always released from labour, and enjoyed a great recreation day.

Our new sister, when she was introduced to the "holy" society of us "saints," proved to be young, of about the middle size, and very good looking for a Canadian: for I soon ascertained that she was one of my own countrywomen. The Canadian females are generally not handsome. I never learnt her name nor anything of her history. She had chosen St. Martin for her nun name. She was admitted in the morning, and appeared melancholy all day. This I observed was always the case; and the remarks made by others, led me to believe that they, and all they had seen, had felt sad and miserable for a longer or shorter time. Even the Superior, as it may be recollect, confessed to me that she experienced the same feelings when she was received. When bed-time arrived, she proceeded to the chamber with the rest of us, and was assigned a bed on the side of the room opposite my own, and a little beyond. The nuns were all soon in bed, the usual silence ensued, and I was making my customary mental prayer, and composing myself to sleep, when I heard the most piercing and heart-rending shrieks proceed from our new comrade. Every nun seemed to rise as if by one impulse, for no one could hear such sounds, especially in such total silence, without being greatly excited. A general noise succeeded, for many voices spoke together, uttering cries of surprise, compassion or fear. It was in vain for the night-watch to expect silence; for once we forgot rules and gave vent to our feelings, and she could do nothing but call for the Superior.

I heard a man's voice mingled with the cries and shrieks of the nun. Father Quiblier, of the Seminary, I had felt confident, was in the Superior's room at the time when we retired; and several of the nuns after-

wards assured me that it was he. The Superior soon made her appearance, and in a harsh manner commanded silence. I heard her threaten gagging her, and then say, "You are no better than anybody else, and if you do not obey, you shall be sent to the cells."

One young girl was taken into the Convent during my abode there, under peculiar circumstances. I was acquainted with the whole affair, as I was employed to act a part in it.

Among the novices was a young lady, of about seventeen, the daughter of an old rich Canadian. She had been remarkable for nothing that I know of, except the liveliness of her disposition. The Superior once expressed to us a wish to have her take the veil, though the girl herself had never any intention that I know of. Why the Superior wished to receive her I could only conjecture. One reason might have been, that she expected to receive a considerable sum from her father. She was, however, strongly desirous of having the girl in our community, and one day said — "Let us take her in by a trick, and tell the old man she felt too humble to take the veil in public."

Our plans then being laid, the unsuspecting girl was induced by us, in sport, as we told her and made her believe, to put on such a splendid robe as I had worn on my admission, and pass through some of the ceremonies of taking the veil. After this she was seriously informed that she was considered as having entered the Convent in earnest, and must henceforth bury herself to the world, as she would never be allowed to leave it. We put her on a nun's dress, though she wept, and refused, and expressed the greatest repugnance. The Superior threatened and promised, and flattered by turns, until the poor girl had to submit; but her appearance long showed that she was a nun only by compulsion.

In obedience to the directions of the Superior we

exerted ourselves to make her contented, especially when she was first received, when we got round her and told her we had felt so for a time, but having since become acquainted with the happiness of nun's life, were perfectly content, and would never be willing to leave the Convent. An exception seemed to be made in her favour, in one respect; for I believe no criminal attempt was made upon her, until she had been for some time an inmate of the nunnery.

Soon after her reception, or rather her forcible entry into the Convent, her father called to make inquiries about his daughter. The Superior first spoke with him herself, and then called us to repeat her plausible story, which I did with accuracy. If I had wished to say anything else, I never should have dared.

We told the foolish old man, that his daughter, whom we all affectionately loved, had long desired to become a nun, but had been too humble to wish to appear before spectators, and had, at her own desire, been favoured with a private admission into the community.

The benefit conferred upon himself and his family, by this act of self-consecration, I reminded him, must be truly great and valuable; as every family who furnishes a priest, or a nun, is justly looked upon as receiving the peculiar favour of heaven on that account. The old Canadian, firmly believing every word I was forced to tell him, took the event as a great blessing, and expressed the greatest readiness to pay more than the customary fee to the Convent. After the interview, he withdrew, promising soon to return, and pay a handsome sum to the Convent, which he performed with all despatch and the greatest cheerfulness. The poor girl never heard her father had taken the trouble to call and see her, much less did she know anything of the imposition passed upon him. She remained in the Convent when I left it.

The youngest girl who ever took the veil of our sisterhood, was only fourteen years of age, and considered very pious. She lived but a short time. I was told that she was ill-treated by the priests, and believed her death was in consequence.

---

## CHAPTER XIV.

## INFLUENCING NOVICES.

**I**T was considered a great duty to exert ourselves to influence novices in favour of the Roman Catholic religion; and different nuns were, at different times charged to do what they could, by conversation, to make favourable impressions on the minds of some, who were particularly indicated to us by the Superior. I often heard it remarked, that those who were influenced with the greatest difficulty, were young ladies from the United States; and on some of those, great exertions were made.

Cases in which citizens of the States were said to have been converted to the Roman Catholic faith were sometimes spoken of, and always as if they were considered highly important.

The Bishop, as we are told, was in the public square, on the day of an execution, when, as he said, a stranger looked at him in some peculiar manner, which made him confidently believe God intended to have him converted by his means. When he went home he wrote a letter for him, and the next day he found him again in the same place, and gave him the letter, which led to his becoming a Roman Catholic. This man, it was added, proved to be a citizen of the States.

The Bishop, as I have remarked, was not very dignified on all occasions, and sometimes acted in such a manner as would not have appeared well in public.

One day I saw him preparing for mass; and because he had some difficulty in getting on his robes, showed

evident signs of anger. One of the nuns remarked: "The Bishop is going to perform a passionate mass." Some of the others exclaimed: "Are you not ashamed to speak thus of my lord?" And she was rewarded with a penance.

But it might be hoped that the Bishop would be free from the crimes of which I have declared so many priests to have been guilty. I am far from entertaining such charitable opinions of him; and I had good reasons, after a time.

I was often required to sleep on a sofa, in the room of the present Superior, as I may have already mentioned.

One night, not long after I was first introduced there for that purpose, and within the first twelve months of my wearing the veil, having retired as usual, at about half-past nine, not long after we had got into bed, the alarm-bell from without, which hangs over the Superior's bed was rung. She told me to see who was there; and going down, I heard the signal given, which I have before mentioned, a peculiar kind of hissing sound made through the teeth. I answered with a low "Hum-hum;" and then opened the door. It was Bishop Lartigue, the present Bishop of Montreal. He said to me, "Are you a Novice or a Received?" meaning a Received nun. I answered, a "Received."

He then requested me to conduct him to the Superior's room, which I did. He went to the bed, drew the curtains behind him, and I lay down again upon the sofa, until morning, when the Superior called me, at an early hour, about daylight, and directed me to show him the door, to which I conducted him, and he took his departure.

I continued to visit the cellar frequently, to carry up coal for the fires, without anything more than a general impression that there were two nuns somewhere imprisoned in it. One day, while there on my usual errand, I saw a nun standing on the right of the cellar

in front of one of the cell doors I had before observed; she was apparently engaged with something within. This attracted my attention. The door appeared to close in a small recess, and was fastened with a stout iron bolt on the outside, the end of which was secured by being let into a hole in the stonework which formed the posts. The door, which was of wood, was sunk a few inches beyond the stonework, which rose and formed an arch overhead. Above the bolt was a small window supplied with a fine grating, which swung open, a small bolt having been removed from it, on the outside. The nun I had observed seemed to be whispering with some person within, through the little window; but I hastened to get my coal, and left the cellar, presuming that was the prison. When I visited the place again, being alone, I ventured to the spot, determined to learn the truth, presuming that the imprisoned nuns, of whom the Superior had told me on my admission, were confined there. I spoke at the window where I had seen the nun standing, and heard a voice reply in a whisper. The aperture was so small, and the place so dark, that I could see nobody; but I learnt that a poor wretch was confined there a prisoner. I feared that I might be discovered, and after a few words, which I thought could do no harm, withdrew.

My curiosity was now alive to learn everything I could about so mysterious a subject. I made a few enquiries of St. Xavier, who only informed me that they were punished for refusing to obey the Superior, Bishop, and priests. I afterwards found that the other nuns were acquainted with the fact I had just discovered. All I could learn, however, was that the prisoner in the cell whom I had just spoken with, and another in the cell just beyond, had been confined there several years without having been taken out; but their names, connections, offences, and everything else relating to them, I could never learn, and am still as ignorant of as ever.

Some conjectured that they had refused to comply with some of the rules of the Convent or requisitions of the Superior; others, that they were heiresses whose property was desired for the Convent, and who would not consent to sign deeds of it. Some of the nuns informed me that the severest of their sufferings arose from fear of supernatural beings.

I often spoke with one of them in passing near their cells, when on errands in the cellar, but never ventured to stop long, or to press my enquiries very far. Besides, I found her reserved, and little disposed to converse freely, a thing I could not wonder at when I considered her situation, and the character of persons around her. She spoke like a woman in feeble health, and of broken spirits. I occasionally saw other nuns speaking to them, particularly at meal times, when they were regularly furnished with food, which was such as we ourselves ate.

Their cells were occasionally cleaned, and then the doors were opened. I never looked into them, but was informed that the ground was their only floor. I presumed that they were furnished with straw to lie upon, as I always saw a quantity of old straw scattered about that part of the cellar, after the cells had been cleaned. I once inquired of one of them whether they could converse together, and she replied that they could, through a small opening between their cells, which I could not see.

I once inquired of the one I spoke with in passing, whether she wanted anything, and she replied—

“Tell Jane Ray I want to see her a moment if she can slip away.”

When I went up I took an opportunity to deliver my message to Jane, who concerted with me a signal to be used in future, in case a similar request should be made through me. This was a sly wink at her with one eye accompanied with a slight toss of the head. She then sought an opportunity to visit the cellar, and

was soon able to hold an interview with the poor prisoners, without being noticed by anyone but myself. I afterwards learnt that mad Jane Ray was not so mad but she could feel for those miserable beings, and carry through measures for their comfort. She would often visit them with sympathizing words, and when necessary, conceal part of her food while at table, and secretly convey it into their dungeons. Sometimes we would combine for such an object; and have repeatedly aided her in thus obtaining a larger supply of food than they had been able to obtain from others.

I frequently thought of the two nuns confined in the cells, and occasionally heard something said about them but very little. Whenever I visited the cellar, and thought it safe, I went up to the first of them and spoke a word or two, and usually got some brief reply, without ascertaining that any particular change took place with either of them.

The one with whom alone I ever conversed, spoke English perfectly well, and French, I thought, as well. I supposed she must have been well educated, for I could not tell which was her native language. I remember that she frequently used these words when I wished to say more to her, and which alone showed that she was constantly afraid of punishment:—

“Oh, there’s somebody coming—do go away!”

I have been told that the other prisoner also spoke English.

It was impossible for me to form any certain opinion about the size or appearance of those two miserable creatures, for their cells were perfectly dark, and I never caught the slightest glimpse even of their faces. It is probable they were women not above the middle size, and my reason for this presumption is the following: I was sometimes appointed to lay out the clean clothes for all the nuns in the Convent on Saturday evening, and was always directed to lay by two suits for

the prisoners. Particular orders were given to select the largest sized garments for several tall nuns ; but nothing of the kind was ever said in relation to the clothes for those in the cells.

I had not been long a veiled nun before I requested of the Superior permission to confess to the "Saint Bon Pasteur," (Holy Good Shepherd), that is, the mysterious and nameless nun whom I had heard of while a novice. I knew of several others who had confessed to her at different times, and of some who had sent their clothes to be touched by her when they were sick ; and I felt a desire to unburden my heart of certain things, which I was loath to acknowledge to the Superior, or any of the priests.

The Superior made me wait a little until she could ascertain whether the "Saint Bon Pasteur" was ready to admit me ; and, after a time, returned and told me to enter the old nuns' room. That apartment has twelve beds arranged like the berths of a ship by threes ; and as each bed is broad enough to receive two persons, twenty-four may be lodged there, which was about the number of old nuns in the Convent during most of my stay in it. Near an opposite corner of the apartment was a large glass case, with no appearance of a door, or other opening, in any part of it ; and in that case stood the venerable nun, in the dress of the community, with her thick veil spread over her face, so as to conceal it entirely. She was standing, for the place did not allow room for sitting, and moved a little, which was the only sign of life, as she did not speak. I fell upon my knees before her, and began to confess some of my imperfections, which lay heavy upon my mind, imploring her aid and intercession, that I might be delivered from them. She appeared to listen to me with patience, but still never returned a word in reply.

I became much affected as I went on ; at length began to weep bitterly ; and, when I withdrew, was in tears. It seemed to me that my heart was remarkably

relieved after this exercise, and all the requests I had made, I found, as I believed, strictly fulfilled. I often, afterwards, visited the old nuns' room for the same purpose, and with similar results; so that my belief in the sanctity of the nameless nun, and my regard for her intercession, were unbounded.

What is remarkable, though I repeatedly was sent into that room to dust it, or to put it in order, I remarked that the glass case was vacant and no signs were to be found, either of the nun, or of the way by which she had left it! so that a solemn conclusion rested upon my mind that she had gone on one of her frequent visits to heaven.

A priest would sometimes come in the daytime to teach us to sing, and this was done with some parade or stir, as if it were considered, or meant to be considered, as a thing of importance.

The instructions, however, were entirely repetitions of the words and tunes, nothing being taught even of the first principles of the science. It appeared to me, that although hymns alone were sung, the exercise was chiefly designed for our amusement, to raise our spirits a little, which were apt to become depressed. Mad Jane Ray certainly usually treated the whole thing as a matter of sport, and often excited those of us who understood English, to a great degree of mirth. She had a very fine voice, which was so powerful as generally to be heard above the rest. Sometimes she would be silent when the other nuns began; and the Superior would often call out,—

“Jane Ray, you don't sing.”

She always had some trifling excuse ready, and commonly appeared unwilling to join the rest.

After being urged or commanded by the Superior, she would then strike some English song, or profane parody, which was rendered ten times more ridiculous by the ignorance of the Lady Superior and the majority of the nuns. I cannot help laughing now when I re-

member how she used to stand with perfect composure and sing,

“ I wish I was married and nothing to rue,  
With plenty of money and nothing to do.”

“ Jane Ray, you don’t sing right,” the Superior would exclaim.

“ Oh,” she would reply with perfect coolness, “ that is the English for

‘ Seigneur Dieu de clemence,  
Recois ce grand pecheur !’ ”

And, as sung by her, a person ignorant of the language would naturally be imposed upon. It was extremely difficult for me to conceal my laughter. I have always had greater exertion to make in repressing it than most other persons, and mad Jane Ray often took advantage of this.

Saturday evening usually brought with it much unpleasant work for some of us. We received Sacrament every Sunday; and in preparation for it, on Saturday evening, we asked pardon of the Superior, and of each other, “ for the scandal we had caused them since we last received the Sacrament,” and then asked the Superior’s permission to receive it on the following day. She enquired of each nun, who necessarily asked her permission, whether she, naming her as Saint somebody had concealed any sin that should hinder her receiving it; and if the answer was in the negative, she granted her permission.

On Saturdays we were catechised by a priest, being assembled in a community-room. He sat on the right of the door, in a chair. He often told us stories, and frequently enlarged on the duty of enticing novices into the nunnery. “ Do you not feel happy,” he would say, “ now that you are safely out of the world, and sure of heaven ? But remember how many poor people are yet in the world. Every novice you influence to take the

black veil, will add to your honour in heaven. Tell them how happy you are."

The Superior played one trick while I was in the Convent, which always passed for one of the most admirable she ever carried into execution. We were pretty good judges in a case of this kind; for, as may be presumed, we were rendered familiar with the arts of deception under so accomplished a teacher.

There was an ornament on hand in the Nunnery, of an extraordinary kind, which was prized at ten pounds; but it had been made and exposed to view so long that it became damaged and quite unsaleable. We were one day visited by an old priest from the country, who was evidently somewhat intoxicated; and as he withdrew to go to his lodgings in the Seminary, where the country priests often stay, the Superior conceived a plan for disposing of the old ornament. "Come," said she, "we will send it to the old priest, and swear he has bought it."

We all approved of the ingenious device, for it evidently might be classed among the pious frauds we had so often had recommended to us, both by precept and example; and the ornament was sent to him the next morning, as his property when paid for. He soon came into the Convent, and expressed the greatest surprise that he had been charged with purchasing such a thing, for which he had no need and no desire.

The Superior heard his declaration with patience, but politely insisted that it was a fair bargain; and we then surrounded the old priest, with the strongest assertions that such was the fact, and that nobody would have thought of his purchasing it unless he had expressly engaged to take it. The poor old man was entirely put down. He was certain of the truth; but what could he do to resist or disprove a direct falsehood pronounced by the Superior of a Convent, and sworn to by all her holy nuns? He finally expressed his conviction that we were right; and was compelled to pay his money.

## CHAPTER XV.

## CRIMES OF PRIESTS.

SOME of the priests from the Seminary were in the Nunnery every day and night, and often several at a time. I have seen nearly all of them at different times, though there are about one hundred and fifty in the district of Montreal. There was a difference in their conduct; though I believe every one of them was guilty of licentiousness; while not one did I ever see who maintained a character any way becoming the profession of a priest. Some were gross and degraded in a degree which few of my readers can ever have imagined; and I should be unwilling to offend the eye and corrupt the heart of any one, by an account of their words and actions. Few imaginations can conceive deeds so abominable as they practised, and often required of some of the poor woman, under the fear of severe punishments, and even of death. I do not hesitate to say with the strongest confidence, that although some of the nuns became lost to every sentiment of virtue and honour, especially one of the Congregational Nunnery whom I have before mentioned, Saint Patrick, the greater part of them loathed the practices to which they were compelled to submit, by their Superior and priests, who kept them under so dreadful a bondage.

Some of the priest whom I saw I never knew by name, and the names of others I did not learn for a time, and at last only by accident.

They were always called "Mon Pere," (my father) ~~but~~ sometimes when they had purchased something in

the ornament-room, they would give their real names, with directions where it should be sent. Many names, thus learnt, and in other ways, were whispered about from nun to nun, and became pretty generally known. Several of the priests some of us had seen before we entered the Convent.

Many things of which I speak, from the nature of the case, must necessarily rest chiefly upon my own word, until further evidence can be obtained; but there are some facts for which I can appeal to the knowledge of others. It is commonly known in Montreal that some of the priests occasionally withdraw from their customary employments, and are not to be seen for some time; it being understood that they have retired for religious study, meditation, and devotion, for the improvement of their hearts. Sometimes they are thus withdrawn from the world for weeks; but there is no fixed period.

This was a fact I knew before I took the veil; for it is a frequent subject of remark, that such or such a Father is on a "holy retreat." This is a term which conveys the idea of a religious seclusion from the world, for sacred purposes. On the re-appearance of a priest after such a period, in the church or the streets, it is natural to feel a peculiar impression of his devout character—an impression very different from that conveyed to the mind of one who knows matters as they really are. Suspicions have been indulged by some in Canada on this subject, and facts are known by at least a few. I am able to speak from personal knowledge; for I have been a nun of Sœur Bourgeoise.

The priests are liable, by their dissolute habits, to occasional attacks of disease, which render it necessary, or at least prudent, to submit to medical treatment.

In the Black Nunnery they find private accommodation, for they are free to enter one of the private hospitals whenever they please; which is a room set apart on purpose for the accommodation of the priests.

and is called a retreat-room. But an excuse is necessary to blind the public, and this they find in the pretence they make of being in a "Holy Retreat." Many such cases have I known; and I can mention the names of priests who have been confined in this Holy Retreat. They are very carefully attended by the Superior and old nuns, and their diet consists mostly of vegetable soups, &c., with but little meat, and that fresh. I have seen an instrument of surgery lying upon the table in that holy room, which is used only for particular purposes.

Father Tombean, a Roman priest, was on one of his holy retreats about the time when I left the Nunnery. There are sometimes a number confined there at the same time. The victims of these priests frequently share the same fate.

I have often reflected how grievously I had been deceived in my opinion of a nun's condition! All the holiness of their lives, I now saw was merely pretended. The appearance of sanctity and heavenly-mindedness which they had shown among us novices, I found was only a disguise to conceal such practices as would not be tolerated in any decent society in the world; and as for joy and peace like that of heaven, which I had expected to find among them, I learnt too well that they did not exist there.

The only way in which such thoughts were counteracted was by the constant instructions given us by the Superior and priests, to regard every doubt as a mortal sin. Other faults we might have, as we were told over and over again, which though worthy of penances, were far less sinful than these. For a nun to doubt that she was doing her duty in fulfilling her vows and oaths, was a heinous offence, and we were exhorted always to suppress our doubts, to confess them without reserve and cheerfully submit to severe penances on account of them, as the only means of morti-

fying our evil dispositions, and resisting the temptations of the devil. Thus we learnt in a good degree to resist our minds and consciences, when we felt the rising of a question about the duty of doing anything required of us.

To enforce this upon us they employed various means. Some of the most striking stories told us at catechism by the priests, were designed for this end. One of these I will repeat. "One day," as a priest assured us, who was hearing us say the catechism on Saturday afternoon, "as one Monsieur \* \* \*, a well known citizen of Montreal, was walking near the cathedral, he saw Satan giving orders to innumerable evil spirits who were assembled around him. Being afraid of being seen, and yet wishing to observe what was done, he hid himself where he could observe all that passed. Satan despatched his devils to different parts of the city, with directions to do their best for him; and they returned in a short time, bringing in reports of their success in leading persons of different classes to the commission of various sins, which they thought would be agreeable to their master. Satan, however, expressed his dissatisfaction, and ordered them out again, but just then a spirit from the Black Nunnery came, who had not been seen before, and stated that he had been trying for seven years to persuade one of the nuns to doubt, and had just succeeded. Satan received the intelligence with the highest pleasure; and turning to the spirits around him, said: 'You have not half done your work,—he has done much more than all of you.' "

In spite, however, of our instructions and warnings, our fears and penances, such doubts would obtrude; and I have often indulged them for a time, and at length, yielding to the belief that I was wrong in giving place to them, would confess them, and undergo with cheerfulness such new penances as I was loaded with. Others, too, would occasionally entertain and privately

express such doubts; though we all had been most solemnly warned by the cruel murder of Saint Frances. Occasionally some of the nuns would go further, and resist the restraints of punishments imposed upon them; and it was not uncommon to hear screams, sometimes of a most piercing and terrific kind, from nuns suffering under discipline.

Some of my readers may feel disposed to exclaim against me, for believing things which will strike them as so monstrous and abominable. To such I would say, without pretending to justify myself:—you know little of the position in which I was placed; in the first place, ignorant of any other religious doctrines, and in the second, met at every moment by some ingenious argument, and the example of a large community, who received all the instructions of the priests as of undoubted truth, and practised upon them. Of the variety and speciousness of the arguments used, you cannot have any correct idea. They were often so ready with replies, examples, anecdotes, and authorities, to enforce their doctrines, that it seemed to me as if they could never have learnt it all from books, but must have been taught by wicked spirits.

Indeed, when I reflect upon their conversations, I am astonished at their art and address, and find it difficult to account for their subtlety and success in influencing my mind, and persuading me to anything they pleased. It seems to me that hardly anybody would be safe in their hands. If you were to go to confession twice, I believe you would feel very different from what you do now. They have such a way of avoiding one thing and speaking of another, of affirming this, and doubting and disputing that, of quoting authorities, and speaking of wonders and miracles recently performed, in confirmation of what they teach, as familiarly known to persons whom they call by name, and whom they pretend to offer as witnesses, though they never give you

an opportunity to speak with them.—these, and many other means, they use in such a way, that they always blinded my mind, and I should think, would blind the minds of others.

---

## CHAPTER XVI.

## TREATMENT OF INFANTS.

IT will be recollected, that I was informed immediately after receiving the veil, that infants were occasionally murdered in the Convent. I was one day in the nuns' private sick room, when I had an opportunity unsought for, of witnessing deeds of such a nature. It was, perhaps, a month after the death of St. Frances.

Two little twin babes, the children of St. Catherine, were brought to a priest, who was in the room, for baptism. I was present while the ceremony was performed, with the Superior and several of the old nuns, whose names I never knew, they being called Ma tant (Aunt).

The priests took turns in attending to confession and catechism in the Convent, usually three months at a time, though sometimes longer periods. The priest then on duty was Father Larkin. He is a good-looking European, and has a brother who is a Professor in the College. He first put oil upon the heads of the infants, as is the custom before baptism. When they had baptised the children, they were taken, one after another, by one of the old nuns, in the presence of us all. She pressed her hand upon the mouth and nose of the first so tight that it could not breathe, and in a few minutes, when the hand was removed, it was dead. She then took the other, and treated it in the same way. No sound was heard, and both the children were corpses. The greatest indifference was shown by all present during this operation; for all, as I well knew, were

long accustomed to such scenes. The little bodies were then taken into the cellar, thrown into the pit I have mentioned, and covered with a quantity of lime.

I afterwards saw a new-born infant treated in the same manner, in the same place but the actors in this scene I choose not to name, nor the circumstances, as everything connected with it is of a peculiarly trying and painful nature to my own feelings.

These were the only instances of infanticide I witnessed; and it seemed to be merely owing to accident that I was then present. So far as I know there were no pains taken to preserve secrecy on this subject; that is, I saw no attempt made to keep any inmate of the Convent in ignorance of the murder of the children. On the contrary, others were told, as well as myself, on their first admission as veiled nuns, that all infants born in the place were baptised and killed, without loss of time! and I had been called to witness the murder of the three just mentioned, only because I happened to be in the room at the time.

That others were killed in the same manner, during my stay in the nunnery, I am well assured.

How many there were I cannot tell, and having taken no account of those I heard of, I cannot speak with precision; I believe, however, that I learnt through nuns, that at least eighteen or twenty infants were smothered, and secretly buried in the cellar while I was a nun.

One of the effects of the weariness of our bodies and minds, was our proneness to talk in our sleep. It was both ludicrous and painful to hear the nuns repeat their prayers in the course of the night, as they frequently did in their dreams. Requiring to keep our minds continually on the stretch, both in watching our conduct, in remembering the rules and our prayers, under the fear of the consequences of any neglect, when we closed our eyes in sleep, we often went over again the scenes of the day; and it was no uncommon thing for me to hear

a nun repeat one or two of her long exercises in the dead of the night. Sometimes by the time she had finished, another, in a different part of the room, would happen to take a similar turn, and commence a similar recitation; and I have known cases in which several such unconscious exercises were performed, all within an hour or two.

We had now and then a recreation day, when we were relieved from our customary labour, and from all prayers except those for morning and evening, and the short ones said at every striking of the clock. The greater part of our time was then occupied with different games, particularly backgammon and drafts, and in such conversation as did not relate to our past lives, and the outside of the Convent. Sometimes, however, our sports would be interrupted on such days by the entrance of one of the priests, who would come in and propose that his fete, the birthday of his patron saint, should be kept by "the saints." We saints!

Several nuns died at different times while I was in the Convent; how many I cannot say, but there was a considerable number. I might rather say many in proportion to the number in the nunnery. The proportion of deaths I am sure was very large. There were always some in the nuns' sick-room, and several interments took place in the chapel.

When a Black Nun is dead, the corpse is dressed as if living, and placed in the chapel in a sitting posture, within the railing round the altar, with a book in the hand as if reading. Persons are then freely admitted from the street, and some of them read and pray before it. No particular notoriety is given. I believe, to this exhibition out of the Convent, but such a case usually excites some attention.

The living nuns are required to say prayers for the delivery of their deceased sister from purgatory, being informed, as in all other such cases, that if she is not there, and has no need of our intercession, our prayers

are in no danger of being thrown away, as they will be set down to the account of some of our deceased friends or at least to that of the souls which have no acquaintances to pray for them.

It was customary for us occasionally to kneel before a dead nun thus seated in the chapel, and I have often performed that task. It was always painful, for the ghastly countenance being seen whenever I raised my eyes, and the feeling that the position and dress were entirely opposed to every idea of propriety in such a case, always made me melancholy.

The Superior sometimes left the Convent, and was absent for an hour, or several hours at a time, but we never knew of it until she had returned, and were not informed where she had been. I one day had reason to presume that she had recently paid a visit to the priests' farm, though I had not direct evidence that such was the fact. The priests' farm is a fine tract of land belonging to the Seminary, a little distance from the city, near the Lachine road, with a large old-fashioned edifice upon it. I happened to be in the Superior's room on the day alluded to, when she made some remark on the plainness and poverty of her furniture. I replied that she was not proud, and could not be dissatisfied on that account; she answered:—

“No; but if I was, how much superior is the furniture at the priests' farm, the poorest room there is furnished better than the best of mine.”

I was one day mending the fire in the Superior's room, when a priest was conversing with her on the scarcity of money; and I heard him say that very little money was received by the priests for prayers, but that the principal part came with penances and absolutions.

One of the most remarkable and unaccountable things that happened in the Convent, was the disappearance of the old Superior. She had performed her customary part during the day, and had acted and appeared just as usual. She had shown no symptoms of ill-health,

met with no particular difficulty in conducting business, and no agitation, anxiety, or gloom had been noticed in her conduct. We had no reason to suppose that during the day she had expected anything particular to occur, any more than the rest of us.

After the close of our customary labours and evening lectures, she dismissed us to retire to bed, exactly in her usual manner. The next morning the bell rang, we sprang from our beds, hurried on our clothes as usual, and proceeded to the community-room in double line, to commence the morning exercise. There, to our surprise, we found Bishop Lartique; but the Superior was no where to be seen. The Bishop soon addressed us, instead of her, and informed us, that a lady near him, whom he presented to us, was now the Superior of the Convent, and enjoined upon us the same respect and obedience which we paid to her predecessor.

The lady he introduced to us was one of our oldest nuns, Saint Du\*\*\*\*, a very large, fleshy woman, with swelled limbs, which rendered her very slow in walking, and often gave her great distress. Not a word was dropped from which we could conjecture the cause of this change, nor of the fate of the old Superior. I took the first opportunity to enquire of one of the nuns, whom I dared to talk to, what had become of her; but I found them as ignorant as myself, though suspicious that she had been murdered by order of the Bishop. Never did I obtain any light on her mysterious disappearance. I am confident, however, that if the Bishop wished to get rid of her privately, and by foul means, he had ample opportunities and power at his command. Jane Ray, as usual, could not allow such an occurrence to pass by without intimating her own suspicions more plainly than any other of the nuns would have dared to do. She spoke out one day in the community-room, and said, "I'm going to have a hunt in the cellar for my old Superior."

"Hush, Jane Ray!" exclaimed some of the nuns,

"you'll be punished."

"My mother used to tell me," replied Jane, "never to be afraid of the face of man."

It cannot be thought strange that we were superstitious. Some were more easily terrified than others by unaccountable sights and sounds; but all of us believed in the power and occasional appearance of spirits, and were ready to look for them at almost any time. I have seen several instances of alarm caused by such superstition, and have experienced it myself more than once. I was one day sitting mending aprons, beside one of the old nuns, in the community-room, while the litanies were repeating; as I was very easy to laugh, Saint Ignace, or Agnes, came in, walked up to her with much agitation, and began to whisper in her ear. She usually talked but little, and that made me more curious to know what was the matter. I overheard her say to the old nun, in much alarm, that in the cellar from which she had just returned, she had heard the most dreadful groans that ever came from any human being. This was enough to give me uneasiness. I could not account for the appearance of an evil spirit in any part of the Convent, for I had been assured that the only one ever known there was that of the nun who had died with an unconfessed sin; and that others were kept at a distance by the holy water that was rather profusely used in different parts of the nunnery. Still, I presumed that the sounds heard by Saint Ignace must have proceeded from some devil, and I felt great dread at the thought of visiting the cellar again. I determined to seek further information of the terrified nun, but when I addressed her on the subject, at recreation-time, the first opportunity I could find, she replied, that I was always trying to make her break silence, and walked off to another group in the room, so that I could obtain no satisfaction.

It is remarkable that in our nunnery, we were almost entirely cut off from the means of knowing anything

even of each other. There were many nuns whom I know nothing of to this day, after having been in the same room with them every day and night for four years. There was a nun, whom I supposed to be in the Convent, and whom I was anxious to learn something about from the time of my entrance as a novice; but I never was able to learn anything concerning her, not even whether she was in the nunnery or not, whether alive or dead. She was the daughter of a rich family, residing at Point aux Trembles, of whom I had heard my mother speak before I entered the Convent. The name of her family I think was Lafayette, and she was thought to be from Europe. She was known to have taken the Black Veil, but as I was not acquainted with the Saint she had assumed, and I could not describe her in "the world," all my enquiries and observations proved entirely in vain.

I had heard before my entrance into the Convent, that one of the nuns had made her escape from it during the last war, and once inquired about her of the Superior. She admitted that such was the fact; but I was never able to learn any particulars concerning her name, origin, or manner of escape.

---

## CHAPTER XVI.

## DISAPPEARANCE OF NUNS.

I AM unable to say how many nuns disappeared while I was in the Convent. There were several. One was a young lady called St. Pierre, I think, but am not certain of her name. There were two nuns by this name. I had known her as a novice with me. She had been a novice about two years and a half before I became one. She was rather large without being tall, and had rather dark hair and eyes. She disappeared unaccountably, and nothing was said of her except what I heard in whispers from a few nuns, as we found moments when we could speak unobserved.

Some told me they thought she must have left the Convent; and I might have supposed so, had I not sometimes afterwards found some of her things lying about, which she would, in such a case, doubtless have taken with her. I had never known anything more of her than what I could observe or conjecture. I had always, however, the idea that her parents or friends were wealthy, for she sometimes received clothes and other things which were very rich.

Another nun named St. Paul, died suddenly, but as in other cases, we knew so little, or rather were so entirely ignorant of the cause and circumstances, that we could only conjecture; and being forbidden to speak freely upon that or any other subject, thought little about it. I have mentioned that a number of veiled nuns thus mysteriously disappeared during my residence among them. I cannot perhaps recall them

all, but I am confident there were as many as five, and I think more. All that we knew in such cases was, that one of our number who appeared as usual when last observed, was nowhere to be seen, and never was again.—Mad Jane Ray, on several such occasions, would indulge in her bold, and, as we thought, dangerous remarks. She had intimated that some of those, who had been for some time in the Convent, were by some means removed to make room for new ones; and it was generally the fact, that the disappearance of one and the introduction of another into our community, were nearly at the same time. I have repeatedly heard Jane Ray say, with one of her significant looks, “When you appear, somebody else disappears!”

It is unpleasant enough to distress or torture one's self; but there is sometimes worse in being tormented by others, especially where they resort to force, and show a pleasure in compelling you, and leave you no hope to escape, or opportunity to resist. I had seen the gags repeatedly in use, and sometimes applied with a roughness which seemed rather inhuman; but it is one thing to see and another thing to feel. They were ready to recommend a resort to compulsory measures, and ever ready to run for the gags. These were kept in one of the community-rooms, in a drawer between two closets; and there a stock of about fifty of them were always kept in deposit. Sometimes a number of nuns would prove refractory at a time: and I have seen battles commenced in which several appeared on both sides. The disobedient were, however, soon overpowered: and to prevent their screams from being heard beyond the walls, gagging commenced immediately. I have seen half a dozen lying gagged and bound at once.

I have been subjected to the same state of involuntary silence more than once; for sometimes I became excited to a state of desperation by the measures used against me, and then conducted myself in a manner

perhaps not less violent than some others. My hands have been tied behind me, and a gag put into my mouth, sometimes with such force and rudeness as to separate my lips, and cause the blood to flow freely.

Treatment of this kind is apt to teach submission; and many times I have acquiesced under orders received, or wishes expressed, with a fear of a recurrence to some severe measures.

One day I had incurred the anger of the Superior in a greater degree than usual, and it was ordered that I should be taken to one of the cells. I was taken by some of the nuns, bound and gagged, carried down the stairs into the cellar, and laid upon the floor. Not long afterwards I induced one of the nuns to request the Superior to come down and see me: and on making some acknowledgment, I was released. I will, however, relate this story rather more in detail.

On that day I had been engaged with Jane Ray, in carrying into effect a plan of revenge upon another person, when I fell under the vindictive spirit of some of the old nuns and suffered severely. The Superior ordered me to the cells, and a scene of violence commenced which I will not attempt to describe, nor the precise circumstances which led to it. Suffice it to say, that after I had exhausted all my strength, by resisting as long as I could, against several nuns, I had my hands drawn behind my back, a leathern band passed first round my thumbs, then round my hands, and then round my waist and fastened. This was drawn so tight that it cut through the flesh of my thumbs, making wounds, the scars of which still remain. A gag was then forced into my mouth, not indeed so violently as it sometimes was, but roughly enough? after which I was taken by main force, and carried down into the cellar, across it almost to the opposite extremity and brought to the last of the second range of cells on the left hand. The door was opened, and I was thrown in with violence, and left

alone, the door being immediately closed, and bolted on the outside. The bare ground was under me, cold and hard as if it had been beaten even. I lay still in the position in which I had fallen, as it would have been difficult for me to move, confined as I was, and exhausted by my exertions; and the shock of my fall, and my wretched state of desperation and fear disinclined me from any further attempt. I was in almost total darkness, there being nothing perceptible except a slight glimmer of light which came in through the little window far above me.

How long I remained in that condition I can only conjecture. It seemed to me a long time, and must have been two or three hours. I did not move, expecting to die there, and in a state of distress which I cannot describe, from the tight bondage about my hands, and the gag holding my jaws apart at their greatest extension. I am confident I must have died before morning, if, as I then expected, I had been left there all night. By-and-bye, however, the bolt was drawn, the door opened, and Jane Ray spoke to me in a tone of kindness.

She had taken an opportunity to slip into the cellar unnoticed, on purpose to see me. She unbound the gag, took it out of my mouth, and told me she would do anything to get me out of that dungeon. If she had had the bringing of me down she would not have thrust me in so brutally, and she would be resented on those who had. She offered to throw herself upon her knees before the Superior, and beg her forgiveness. To this I would not consent; but told her to ask the Superior to come to me, as I wished to speak to her. This I had no idea she would condescend to do; but Jane had not been gone long before the Superior came, and asked if I repented in the sight of God for what I had done. I replied in the affirmative; and after a lecture of some length on the pain I had given the Virgin Mary by my

conduct, she asked me whether I was willing to ask pardon of all the nuns for the scandal I had caused them by my behaviour. To this I made no objection; and I was then released from my prison and my bonds, went up to the community-room, and kneeling before all the sisters in succession, begged the forgiveness and prayers of each.

Among the marks which I still bear of the wounds received from penances and violence, are the scars left by the belt with which I repeatedly tortured myself, for the mortification of my spirit. These are most distinct on my side; for although the band, which was four to five inches in breadth, and extended round the waist, was stuck full of sharp iron points in all parts, it was sometimes crowded most against my side, by resting in my chair, and then the wounds were usually deeper there than anywhere else.

My thumbs were several times cut severely by the tight drawing of the band used to confine my arms; the scars are still visible upon them.

The rough gagging which I several times endured wounded my lips very much; for it was common, in that operation to thrust the gag hard against the teeth, and catch one or both the lips, which were sometimes cruelly cut. The object was to stop the screams made by the offender, as soon as possible; and some of the old nuns delighted in tormenting us. A gag was once forced into my mouth, which had a large splinter upon it; and this cut through my upper lip, in front, leaving to this day a scar about half an inch long. The same lip was several times wounded as well as the other; but one day worse than ever, when a narrow piece was cut off from the left side of it, by being pinched between the gag and the under fore-teeth; and this has left an inequality in it which is still observable.

One of the most shocking stories I heard of events that occurred in the nunnery before my acquaintance with it was the following, which was told me by Jane

Ray. What is uncommon, I can date when I heard it. It was on New Year's Day, 1834. The ceremonies, customary in the early part of that day, had been performed; after mass, in the morning, the Superior had shaken hands with all the nuns, and given us her blessing, for she was said to have received power from heaven to do so once a year, and then on the first day of the year. Besides this, cakes, raisins, &c., are distributed to the nuns on that day.

While in the community-room, I had taken a seat just within the cupboard door, where I often found a partial shelter from observation with Jane, when a conversation incidentally began between us. Our practice often was, to take places there beside one of the old nuns, awaiting the time when she would go away for a little while, and leave us partially screened from the observation of others. On that occasion, Jane and I were left for a time alone; when, after some discourse on suicide, she remarked that three nuns once killed themselves in the Convent. This happened, she said, not long after her reception, and I knew, therefore, that it was several years before, for she had been received a considerable time before I became a novice. Three young ladies, she informed me, took the veil together, or very near the same time, I am not certain which. I know they have four robes in the Convent to be worn during the ceremony of taking the veil: but I never have seen more than one of them used at a time.

Two of the new nuns were sisters, and the other their cousin. They had been received but a few days when information was given one morning, that they had been found dead in their beds, amid a profusion of blood. Jane Ray said she saw their corpses, and that they appeared to have killed themselves, by opening veins in their arms with a knife they had obtained, and all had bled together. What was extraordinary, Jane Ray added, that she heard no noise, and she believed nobody had suspected that anything was wrong

during the night. St. Hypolite, however, had stated that she had found them in the morning, after the other nuns had gone to prayers, lying lifeless in their beds.

For some reason or other, their death was not made public; but their bodies, instead of being exhibited in full dress, in the chapel, and afterwards interred with solemnity beneath it, were taken unceremoniously into the cellar, and thrown into the hole I have so often mentioned.

There were a few instances, and only a few, in which we knew anything that was happening in the world; and even then our knowledge did not extend out of the city. I can recall but three occasions of this kind. Two of them were when the cholera prevailed in Montreal: and the other was the election riots. The appearance of the cholera, in both seasons of its ravages, gave us abundance of occupation. Indeed, we were more borne down by hard labour at those times, than ever before or afterwards during my stay. The Pope had given early notice that the burning of wax candles could afford protection from the disease, because so long as any person continued to burn one, the Virgin Mary would intercede for him. No sooner, therefore, had the alarming disease made its appearance in Montreal, than a long wax candle was lighted in the Convent, for each of the inmates, so that all parts of it in use were artificially illuminated day and night. Thus a great many candles were constantly burning, which were to be replaced from those manufactured by the nuns. But this was a trifle. The Pope's message having been promulgated in the Grey Nunnery, and to Catholics at large through the pulpits, an extraordinary demand was created for wax candles, to supply which we were principally depended upon. All who could be employed in making them were therefore set to work, and I, among the rest, assisted in different departments, and witnessed all.~

Numbers of the nuns had been long familiar with the business; for a very considerable amount of wax had been annually manufactured in the Convent; but now the works were much extended, and other occupations in a great degree laid aside. Large quantities of wax were received into the building, which was said to have been imported from England: kettles were placed in some of the working-rooms, in which it was clarified by heat over coal fires, and when prepared, the process of dipping commenced. The wicks, which were quite long, were placed, hanging upon a reel, taken up and dipped in succession, until after many slow revolutions of the reel, the candles were of the proper size. They were then taken to a part of the room where tables were prepared for rolling them smooth. This is done by passing a roller over them, until they become even and polished; after which they are laid by for sale. These processes caused a constant bustle in some of the rooms: and the melancholy reports from without, of the ravages of the cholera, with the uncertainty of what might be the result with us, notwithstanding the promised intercession of the Virgin, and brilliant lights constantly burning in such numbers around us, impressed the scenes I used to witness very deeply on my mind. I had very little doubt of the strict truth of the story we had heard of the security conferred upon those who burnt candles, and yet sometimes serious fears arose in my mind. These thoughts I did my utmost to regard as great sins, and evidences of my want of faith.

It was during that period that I formed a partial acquaintance with several Grey Nuns, who used to come frequently for supplies of candles for their Convent. I had no opportunity to converse with them, except so far as the purchase and sale of the articles they required. I became familiar with their countenances and appearance, but was unable to judge of their characters or feelings. Concerning the rules and

habits prevailing in the Grey Nunnery, I therefore remained as ignorant as if I had been a thousand miles off: and they had no better opportunity to learn anything of us, beyond what they could see around them in the room where the candles were sold.

We supplied the Congregational Nunnery also with wax candles, as I before remarked; and in both these institutions, it was understood, a constant illumination was kept up. Citizens were also frequently running in to buy candles in great and small quantities, so that the business of store-keeping was far more laborious than common.

We were confirmed in our faith in the intercession of the Virgin, when we found that we remained safe from cholera; and it is a remarkable fact, that not one case of that disease existed in the Nunnery, during either of the seasons in which it proved so fatal in the city.

When the election riots prevailed at Montreal, the city was thrown into general alarm; we heard some reports from day to day, which made us anxious for ourselves. Nothing, however, gave me any serious thoughts, until I saw uncommon movements in some parts of the Nunnery, and ascertained, to my own satisfaction, that there was a large quantity of gunpowder stored in some secret place within the walls, and that some of it was removed, or prepared for use, under the direction of the Superior.

*Penances.*—I have mentioned several penances in different parts of this narration, which we sometimes had to perform. There are a great variety of them; and, while some, though trifling in appearance became very painful, by long endurance or frequent repetition, others are severe in their nature, and never would be submitted to, unless, through fear of something worse, or a real belief in their efficacy to remove guilt. I will mention here such as I recollect, which can be named without offending a virtuous ear: for some there were, which although I have been compelled to submit to,

either by a misled conscience, or the fear of severe punishment, now that I am better able to judge of my duties, and at liberty to act, I would not mention or describe.

Kissing the floor is a very common penance; kneeling and kissing the feet of the other nuns is another; as are kneeling on hard peas, and walking with them in the shoes. We had repeatedly to walk on our knees through the subterranean passage, leading to the Congregational Nunnery; and sometimes to eat our meals with a rope round our necks. Sometimes we were fed only with such things as we most disliked. Garlic was given to me on this account, because I had a strong antipathy against it.

Eels were repeatedly given some of us, because we felt an unconquerable repugnance to them, on account of reports we heard of their feeding on dead carcasses in the river St. Lawrence. It was no uncommon thing for us to be required to drink the water in which the Superior had washed her feet. Sometimes we were required to brand ourselves with a hot iron, so as to leave scars; at other times, to whip our naked flesh with several small rods, before a private altar, until we drew blood. I can assert with the perfect knowledge of the fact, that many of the nuns bear the scars of these wounds.

One of the penances was to stand for a length of time with the arms extended, in imitation of the Saviour on the Cross. The *Chemin de la croix*, or Road to the Cross, is, in fact, a penance, though it consists of a variety of prostrations, with the repetition of many prayers, occupying two or three hours. This we had to perform frequently going in chapel, and falling before each chapelle in succession, at each time commemorating some particular act or circumstance reported of the Saviour's progress to the place of his crucifixion. Sometimes we were obliged to sleep on the floor in the winter, with nothing over us but a single

sheet; and sometimes to chew a piece of window glass to a fine powder, in the presence of the Superior.

We had sometimes to wear a leathern belt stuck full of sharp metallic points, round our waists and the upper part of our arms, bound on so tight that they penetrated the flesh, and drew blood.

Some of the penances were so severe, that they seemed too much to be endured; and when they were imposed, the nuns who were to suffer them showed the most violent repugnance. They would often resist, and still oftener express their opposition by exclamations and screams.

Never, however, was any noise heard from them for a long time, for there was a remedy always ready to be applied in cases of the kind. The gag which was put into the mouth of the unfortunate St. Frances, had been brought from a place where there were forty or fifty others of different shapes and sizes. These I have seen in their depository, which is a drawer between two closets, in one of the community-rooms. Whenever any loud noise was made, one of these instruments was demanded, and gagging commenced at once. I have known many instances, and sometimes five or six nuns gagged at once. Sometimes, they would become so much excited before they could be bound and gagged, that considerable force was necessary to be exerted; and I have seen the blood flowing from mouths into which the gag had been thrust with violence.

Indeed I ought to know something of this department of nunnery discipline: I have had it tried upon myself, and can bear witness that it is not only most humiliating and oppressive, but often extremely painful. The mouth is kept forced open, and the straining of the jaws at their utmost stretch, for a considerable time, is very distressing.

One of the worst punishments which I ever saw inflicted, was that with the cap; and yet some of the old nuns were permitted to inflict it at their pleasure.

I have repeatedly known them to go for a cap when one of our number has transgressed a rule, sometimes though it were a very unimportant one. These caps were kept in a cupboard in the old nuns' room, whence they were brought when wanted.

They were small, made of a reddish looking leather, fitted closely to the head, and fastened under the chin with a kind of buckle. It was the common practice to tie the nun's hands behind, and gag her before the cap was put on, to prevent noise and resistance. I never saw it worn by any one for a moment, without throwing them into severe sufferings. If permitted they would scream in the most shocking manner, and always writhed as much as their confinement would allow. I can speak from personal knowledge of this punishment, as I have endured it more than once; and yet I have no idea of the cause of the pain. I never examined one of the caps, nor saw the inside, for they are always brought and taken away quickly; but although the first sensation was that of coolness, it was hardly put on my head before a violent and indescribable sensation began, like that of a blister, only much more insupportable: and this continued until it was removed. It would produce such an acute pain as to throw us into convulsions, and I think no human being could endure it for an hour. After this punishment, we felt its effects through the system for many days. Having once known what it was by experience, I held the cap in dread, and whenever I was condemned to suffer the punishment again, felt ready to do anything to avoid it. But when tied and gagged, with the cap on my head again, I could only sink upon the floor, and roll about in anguish until it was taken off.

This was usually done in about ten minutes, sometimes less, but the pain always continued in my head for several days. I thought that it might take away a person's reason if kept on a much longer time. If I had not been gagged, I am sure I should have uttered

awful screams. I have felt the effects for a week. Sometimes fresh cabbage leaves were applied to my head to remove it. Having had no opportunity to examine my head, I cannot say more.

---

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## PUNISHMENTS AND CRIMES.

**T**HIS punishment was occasionally resorted to for very trifling offences, such as washing the hands without permission; and it was generally applied on the spot, and before the other nuns in the community-room.

I have mentioned before, that the country, so far down as Three Rivers, is furnished with priests by the Seminary of Montreal; and that these hundred and fifty men are liable to be occasionally transferred from one station to another. Numbers of them are often to be seen in the streets of Montreal, as they may find a home in the Seminary.

They are considered as having an equal right to enter the Black Nunnery whenever they please; and, then, according to our oaths, they have complete control over the nuns. To name all the works of shame of which they are guilty in that retreat, would require much time and space, neither would it be necessary to the accomplishment of my object, which is, the publication of but some of their criminality to the world, and the development in general terms of scenes thus far carried on in secret within the walls of that Convent where I was so long an inmate.

Secure against détection by the world, they never believed that an eye-witness would ever escape to tell of their crimes, and declare some of their names before the world; but the time has come, and some of their deeds of darkness must come to the day. I have seen in

the Nunnery, the priests, from more, I presume, than a hundred country places, admitted for shameful and criminal purposes; from St. Charles, St. Denis, St. Mark's, St. Antoine, Chambly, Berthier, St. John's, &c.

How unexpected to them will be the disclosures I make! Shut up in a place from which there has been thought to be but one way of egress, and that the passage to the grave, they considered themselves safe in perpetrating crimes in our presence, and in making victims would never reach the world for relief or redress us share in their criminality as often as they chose, and conducted more shamelessly than even the brutes.

These debauchées would come in without ceremony, concealing their names, both by night and day. Being within the walls of that prison-house of death, where the cries and pains of the injured innocence of their for their wrongs, without remorse or shame, they would glory, not only in sating their brutal passions, but even in torturing in the most barbarous manner, the feelings of those under their power; telling us at the same time, that this mortifying the flesh was religion, and pleasing to God. The more they could torture us, or make us violate our own feelings, the more pleasure they took in their unclean revelling; and all their brutal obscenity they called meritorious before God.

We were sometimes invited to put ourselves to voluntary sufferings in a variety of ways, not for a penance, but to show our devotion to God. A priest would sometimes say to us—

“Now, which of you have love enough for Jesus Christ to stick a pin through your cheeks?”

Some of us would signify our readiness, and immediately thrust one through up to the head. Sometimes he would propose that we should repeat the operation several times on the spot! and the cheeks of a number of the nuns would be bloody.

There were other acts occasionally proposed and con-

serted to, which I cannot name in a book. Such the Superior would sometimes command us to perform; many of them, things not only useless and unheard of, but loathsome and indecent in the highest possible degree. How they ever could have been invented I never could conceive. Things were done worse than the entire exposure of the person, though this was occasionally required of several at once in the presence of priests.

The Superior of the Seminary would sometimes come and inform us that she had received orders from the Pope, to request that those nuns who possessed the greatest devotion and faith, should be requested to perform some particular deeds, which she named or described in our presence, but of which no decent or moral person could ever endure to speak. I cannot speak what would injure any ear, not debased to the lowest possible degree. I am bound by a regard to truth, however, to confess that deluded women were found amongst us who would comply with their requests.

There was a great difference between the characters of our old and new Superiors, which soon became obvious. The former used to say she liked to walk, because it would prevent her from becoming corpulent. She was, therefore, very active, and constantly going about from one part of the Nunnery to another overseeing us at our various employments. I never saw in her any appearance of timidity; she seemed, on the contrary, bold and masculine, and sometimes much more than that, cruel and cold-blooded, in scenes calculated to overcome any common person. Such a character she had particularly exhibited at the murder of St. Frances.

The new Superior, on the other hand, was so heavy and lame, that she walked with much difficulty, and consequently exercised a less vigilant oversight of the nuns. She was also of a timid disposition, or else had been overcome by some great fright in her past life;

for she was apt to become alarmed in the night, and never liked to be alone in the dark. She had long performed the part of an old nun, which is that of a spy upon the younger ones, and was well known to us in that character, under the name of St. Margarite. Soon after her promotion to the station of Superior, she appointed me to sleep in her apartment, and assigned me a sofa to lie upon. One night, while I was asleep, she suddenly threw herself upon me, and exclaimed in great alarm,—

“Oh, mon Dieu! mon Dieu! qu'estque ca?” (Oh! my God! my God! what is that?”)

I jumped up and looked about the room, but saw nothing, and endeavoured to convince her that there was nothing extraordinary there. But she insisted that a ghost had come and held her bed-curtain, so that she could not draw it. I examined it, and found that the curtain had been caught by a pin in the valence, which had held it back: but it was impossible to tranquillize her for some time. She insisted on my sleeping with her the rest of the night, and I stretched myself across the foot of her bed, and slept there till morning.

During the last part of my stay in the Convent, I was often employed in attending in the hospitals. There are, as I have before mentioned, several apartments devoted to the sick, and there is a physician of Montreal, who attends as physician to the Convent. It must not be supposed, however, that he knows anything concerning the private hospitals. It is a fact of great importance to be distinctly understood, and constantly borne in mind, that he is never, under any circumstances, admitted into the private hospital-rooms. Of those he sees nothing more than any stranger whatever. He is limited to the care of those patients who are admitted from the city into the public hospital, and one of the nuns' hospitals, and these he visits every day.

Sick poor are received for charity by the institution,

attended by some of the nuns, and often go away with the highest ideas of our charitable characters and holy lives. The physician himself might, perhaps, in some cases share in the delusion.

I frequently followed Dr. Nelson through the public hospital, at the direction of the Superior, with pen, ink, and paper, in my hands, and wrote down the prescriptions which he ordered for the different patients. These were afterwards prepared and administered by the attendants.

About a year before I left the Convent, I was first appointed to attend the private sick-rooms, and was frequently employed in that duty up to the day of my departure. Of course I had opportunities to observe the number and classes of patients treated there; and in what I am to say on the subject, I appeal, with perfect confidence, to any true and competent witness to confirm my words, whenever such a witness may appear.

It would be in vain for anybody who has merely visited the Convent from curiosity, or resided in it as a novice, to question my declarations. Such a person must necessarily be ignorant of even the existence of the private rooms, unless informed by some one else. Such rooms, however, there are, and I could relate many things which have passed there during the hours I was employed in them, as I have stated.

One night I was called to sit up with an old nun, named St. Claire, who, in going down stairs, had dislocated a limb, and lay in a sick-room adjoining the hospital. She seemed to be a little out of her head a part of the time, but appeared to be quite in possession of her reason most of the night. It was easy to pretend that she was delirious: but I considered her as speaking the truth, though I felt reluctant to repeat what I hear her say, and excused myself from mentioning it even at confession, on the ground that the Superior thought her deranged.

What led her to some of the most remarkable parts of her conversation was, a motion I made, in the course of the night, to take the light out of her little room into the adjoining apartment, to look once more at the sick persons there. She begged me not to leave her a moment in the dark, for she could not bear it.

"I have witnessed so many horrid scenes," said she, "in this Convent, that I want somebody near me constantly, and must always have a light burning in my room. I cannot tell you," she added, "what things I remember, for they would frighten you too much. What you have seen are nothing to them. Many a murder have I witnessed; many a nice young creature has been killed in this Nunnery. I advise you to be very cautious—keep everything to yourself—there are many here ready to betray you."

What it was that induced the old nun to express so much kindness to me I could not tell, unless she was frightened at the recollection of her own crimes, and those of others, and felt grateful for the care I took of her. She had been one of the night watchers, and never before showed me any particular kindness. She did not indeed go into detail concerning the transactions to which she alluded, but told me that some nuns had been murdered under great aggravations of cruelty, by being gagged, and left to starve in the cells, or having their flesh burned off their bones with red hot irons.

It was uncommon to find compunction expressed by any of the nuns. Habit renders us insensible to the sufferings of others, and careless about our own sins. I had become so hardened myself, that I find it difficult to rid myself of many of my former false principles and views of right and wrong.

I was one day set to wash some empty bottles from the cellar, which had contained the liquid that was poured into the cemetery there. A number of these had been brought from the corner where so many of

them were always to be seen, and placed at the head of the cellar stairs, and there we were required to take them, and wash them out. We poured in water and rinsed them; a few drops which got upon our clothes soon made holes in them. I think the liquid was called vitriol, or some such name, and I heard some persons say that it would soon destroy the flesh and even the bones of the dead. At another time, we were furnished with a little of the liquid, which was mixed with a quantity of water, and used in dyeing some cloth black, which was wanted at funerals in the chapels. Our hands were turned very black by being dipped in it, but a few drops of some other liquid were mixed with fresh water, and given us to wash in, which left our skin of a bright red.

The bottles of which I spoke were made of very thick dark-coloured glass, large at the bottom, and, I should say, held something less than a gallon.

I was once much shocked, on entering the room for the examination of conscience, at seeing a nun hanging by a cord from a ring in the ceiling, with her head downward. Her clothes had been tied round with a leathern strap, to keep them in their place, and then she had been fastened in that situation, with her head some distance from the floor. Her face had a very unpleasant appearance, being dark coloured, and swollen by the rushing in of the blood; her hands were tied, and her mouth stopped with a large gag. This nun proved to be no other than Jane Ray, who for some fault had been condemned to this punishment.

This was not, however, a solitary case; I heard of numbers who were "hung," as it was called, at different times; and I saw St. Hypolite and St. Luke undergoing it. This was considered a most distressing punishment; and it was the only one which Jane Ray could not endure, of all she had tried.

Some of the nuns would allude to it in her presence, but it usually made her angry. It was probably

practised in the same place while I was a novice, but I never heard or thought of such a thing in those days. Whenever we wished to enter the room for the examination of conscience, we had to ask leave, and, after some delay, were permitted to go, but always under a strict charge to bend the head forward, and keep the eyes fixed upon the floor.

---

## CHAPTER XIX.

## IMPRISONED NUNS.

I OFTEN seized an opportunity, when I safely could to speak a cheering or friendly word to one of the poor prisoners, in passing their cells, on my errands in the cellars. For a time I supposed them to be sisters; but I afterwards discovered that this was not the case. I found that they were always under the fear of suffering some punishment, in case they should be found talking with a person not commissioned to attend them. They would often ask, "Is not somebody coming?"

I could easily believe what I heard affirmed by others, that fear was the severest of their sufferings. Confined in the dark, in so gloomy a place, with the long arched cellar stretching off this way and that, visited only now and then by a solitary nun, with whom they were afraid to speak their feelings, and with only the miserable society of each other; how gloomy thus to spend day after day, months, and even years, without prospect of liberation, and liable at any moment to another fate, to which the Bishop or Superior might condemn them! But these poor creatures must have known something of the horrors perpetrated in other parts of the building, and could not have been ignorant of the hole in the cellar, which was not far from the cells, and the use to which it was devoted. One of them told me, in confidence, she wished they could get out. They must also have been often disturbed in their sleep, if they ever did sleep, by the numerous priests who passed through the trap door at no great

distance. To be subject to such trials for a single day would be dreadful; but these nuns had them to endure for years.

I often felt much compassion for them, and wished to see them released; but at other times yielding to the doctrine perpetually taught us in the Convent, that our future happiness would be proportioned to the sufferings we had to undergo in this world, I would rest satisfied that their imprisonment was a real blessing to them.

Others, I presume, participated with me in such feelings. One Sunday afternoon, after we had performed all our ceremonies, and were engaged as usual, at that time, with backgammon and other amusements, one of the young nuns exclaimed, "Oh! how headstrong are those wretches in the cells, they are as bad as the day they were first put in!"

This exclamation was made, as I supposed, in consequence of some recent conversation with them, as I knew her to be particularly acquainted with the older one.

Some of the vacant cells were occasionally used for temporary imprisonment. Three nuns were confined in them, to my knowledge, for disobedience to the Superior, as she called it. They did not join the rest in singing in the evening, being exhausted in the various exertions of the day. The Superior ordered them to sing: and, as they did not comply, after the command had been twice repeated, she ordered them away to the cells.

They were immediately taken down into the cellar, placed in separate dungeons, and the door shut and barred upon them. There they remained through that night, the following day and second night, but were released in time to attend mass on the second morning.

The Superior used occasionally to show something in a glass box, which we were required to regard with the highest degree of reverence. It was made of wax, and called an Agnus Dei. She used to exhibit it to

us when we were in a state of grace : that is, after confession and before sacrament. She said it had been blessed *in the very dish in which our Saviour had eaten*. It was brought from Rome. Every time we kissed it, or even looked at it, we were told it gave a hundred days' release from purgatory to ourselves, or if we did not need it, to our next of kin in purgatory, if not a Protestant. If we had no such kinsman, the benefit was to go to the souls in purgatory not prayed for.

Jane Ray would sometimes say to me, "Let's kiss it—some of our friends will thank us for it."

I have been repeatedly employed in carrying dainties of different kinds into the little private room I have mentioned, next beyond the Superior's sitting-room, in the second story which the priests made their "*Holy Retreat*." That room I never was allowed to enter. I could only go to the door with a waiter of refreshments, set it down upon a little stand near it, give three raps on the door, and then retire to a distance to await orders. When anything was to be taken away, it was placed on the stand by the Superior, who then gave three raps for me, and closed the door.

The Bishop I saw at least once, when he appeared worse for wine, or something of the kind. After partaking of refreshments in the Convent, he sent for all the nuns, and on our appearance, gave us his blessing, and put a piece of pound cake on the shoulder of each of us, in a manner which appeared singular and foolish.

There are three rooms in the Black Nunnery, which I never entered. I had enjoyed much liberty, and had seen, as I supposed, all parts of the building, when one day I observed an old nun go to a corner of an apartment near the northern end of the western wing, push the end of her scissors into a crack in the panelled wall, and pull out a door. I was much surprised, because I never had conjectured that any door was there ; and it appeared, when I afterwards examined the place, that no indication of it could be discovered

on the closest scrutiny. I stepped forward to see what was within, and saw three rooms opening into each other: but the nun refused to admit me within the door, which she said led to rooms kept as depositaries.

She herself entered and closed the door, so that I could not satisfy my curiosity; and no occasion presented itself. I always had a strong desire to know the use of these apartments; for I am sure they must have been designed for some purpose of which I was intentionally kept ignorant, otherwise they never would have remained unknown to me so long. Besides, the old nun evidently had some strong reason for denying me admission, though she endeavoured to quiet ~~my~~ curiosity.

The Superior, after my admission into the Convent, had told me I had access to every room in the building; and I had seen places which bore witness to the cruelties and the crimes committed under her commands or sanction; but here was a succession of rooms which had been concealed from me, and so constructed as if designed to be unknown to all but a few. I am sure that any person, who might be able to examine the wall in that place, would pronounce that secret door a surprising piece of work. I never saw anything of the kind which appeared to me so ingenious and skilfully made. I told Jane Ray what I had seen, and she said at once, "We will get in and see what is there." But I suppose she never found an opportunity.

I naturally felt a good deal of curiosity to learn whether such scenes, as I had witnessed in the death of St. Frances, were common or rare, and took an opportunity to enquire of Jane Ray. Her reply was—

"Oh yes: and there were many murdered while you were a novice, whom you heard nothing about."

This was all I ever learnt on this subject; but although I was told nothing of the manner in which they were killed, I suppose it to be the same which I had seen practised, namely, by smothering.

I went into the Superior's parlour one day for something, and found Jane Ray there alone, looking into a book with an appearance of interest. I asked her what it was, but she made some trifling answer, and laid it by as if unwilling to let me take it. There are two bookcases in the room ; one on the right as you enter the door, and the other opposite, near the window and the sofa. The former contains the lecture-books and other printed volumes, the latter seemed to be filled with note and account books. I have often seen the keys in the bookcases while I have been dusting the furniture, and sometimes observed letters stuck up in the room ; although I never looked into one, or thought of doing so. We were under strict orders not to touch any of them, and the idea of sins and penances was always present with me.

Some time after the occasion mentioned, I was sent into the Superior's room with Jane, to arrange it ; and as the same book was lying out of the case, she said, "Come let us look into it." I immediately consented, and we opened it, and turned over several leaves. It was about a foot and a half long, as nearly as I can remember, a foot wide, and about two inches thick, though I cannot speak with particular precision, as Jane frightened me almost as soon as I touched it, by exclaiming, "There, you have looked into it, and if you tell of me, I will of you."

The thought of being subjected to a severe penance, which I had reason to apprehend, fluttered me very much : and, although I tried to cover my fears, I did not succeed very well. I reflected, however, that the sin was already committed, and that it would not be increased if I examined the book.

I therefore looked a little at several pages, though I still felt a good deal of agitation. I saw at once that the volume was a record of the entrance of nuns and novices into the Convent, and of the births that had taken place in the Convent. Entries of the last des-

cription were made in a brief manner, on the following plan: I do not give the names or dates as real, but only to show the form of entering them.

Saint Mary, delivered of a son, March 16, 1834.

Saint Clarice " daughter, April 2.

Saint Matilda, " daughter, April 30, &c.

No mention was made in the book of the death of the children, though I well knew not one of them could be living at that time.

Now I presume that the period the book embraced was about two years, as several names near the beginning I knew: but I can form only a rough conjecture of the number of infants born, and murdered, of course, records of which it contained. I suppose the book contained at least one hundred pages, and one fourth were written upon, and that each page contained fifteen distinct records. Several pages were devoted to the list of births. On this supposition there must have been a large number, which I can easily believe to have been born there in the course of two years.

What were the contents of the other books belonging to the same case with that which I looked into, I have no idea, having never dared to touch one of them; I believe, however, that Jane Ray was well acquainted with them, knowing, as I do, her intelligence and prying disposition. If she could be brought to give her testimony, she would doubtless unfold many curious particulars now unknown.

I am able, in consequence of a circumstance which appeared accidental, to state with confidence the exact number of persons in the Convent one day of the week in which I left it. This may be a point of some interest, as several deaths have occurred since my taking the veil, and many burials had been openly made in the chapel.

I was appointed, at the time mentioned, to lay out the covers for all the inmates of the Convent, including

the nuns in the cells. These covers, as I have said before, were linen bands, to be bound around the knives, forks, spoons, and napkins, for eating. These were for all the nuns and novices, and amounted to two hundred and ten. As the number of novices was then about thirty, I know that there must have been at that time about one hundred and eighty veiled nuns.

I was occasionally troubled with a desire of escaping from the Nunnery, and was much distressed whenever I felt so evil an imagination rise in my mind. I believed that it was a sin, a great sin, and did not fail to confess, at every opportunity, that I felt discontented. My confessors informed me that I was beset with evil spirits, and urged me to pray against it. Still, however, every now and then, I would think, "Oh, if I could get out."

At length one of the priests to whom I had confessed this sin, informed me, for my comfort, that he had begun to pray to Saint Anthony, and hoped his intercession would, by-and-by, drive away the evil spirit. My desire of escape was partly excited by the fear of bringing an infant to the murderous hands of my companions, or of taking a potion whose violent effects I too well knew.

One evening, however, I found myself more filled with a desire of escape than ever: and what exertions I made to diminish the thought proved entirely unavailing. During evening prayers, I became quite occupied with it; and when the time of meditation arrived, instead of falling into a doze, as I often did, though I was a good deal fatigued, I found no difficulty in keeping awake. When the exercise was over, and the other nuns were about to retire to the sleeping-room, my station being in the private sick-room for the night, I withdrew to my post, which was the little sitting-room adjoining it.

Here, then, I threw myself upon the sofa, and being alone, reflected a few moments on the manner of escaping which had occurred to me. The physician

had arrived a little before, at half-past eight; and I had to accompany him as usual from bed to bed, with pen, ink, and paper, to write down his prescriptions for the direction of the old nun, who was to see them administered.

What I wrote on that evening, I cannot now recollect, as my mind was uncommonly agitated: but my customary way was to note down briefly his orders, in this manner—

1 d. salts, St. Matilda,  
1 blister, St. Genevieve, &c.

I remember that I wrote three orders that evening, and then having finished the rounds, I returned for a few moments to the sitting-room.

There were two ways of access to the street from these rooms; first, the more direct, from the passage adjoining the sick-room down stairs, through a door, into the Nunnery yard, and through a wicker gate: that is the way by which the physician usually enters at night, and he is provided with a key for that purpose.

It would have been unsafe, however, for me to pass out that way, because a man is kept continually in the yard, near the gate, who sleeps at night in a small hut near the door, to escape whose observation would be impossible. My only hope, therefore, was that I might gain my passage through the other way, to do which I must pass through the sick-room, then through a passage or small room usually occupied by an old nun; another passage and staircase leading down to the yard, and a large gate opening into the cross street. I had no liberty to go beyond the sick-room, and knew that several of the doors might be fastened; still I determined to try; although I have often since been astonished at my boldness in undertaking what would expose me to so many hazards of failure, and to severe punishment if found out.

It seemed as if I acted under some extraordinary im-

pulse, which encouraged me to what I should hardly at any other moment have thought of undertaking. I had sat but a short time upon the sofa, however, before I rose with a desperate determination to make the experiment. I therefore walked hastily across the sick-room, passed into the nun's room, walked by in a great hurry, and almost without giving her time to speak or think, said, "A message," and in an instant was through the door, and in the next passage. I think there was another nun with her at the moment; and it is probable that my hurried manner, and prompt intimation that I was sent on a pressing mission to the Superior, prevented them from entertaining any suspicion of my intention. Besides, I had the written orders of the physician in my hand, which may have tended to mislead them; and it was well known to some of the nuns that I had twice left the Convent, and returned from choice, so that I was probably more likely to be trusted to remain than many of the others.

The passage which I had now reached had several doors, with all which I was acquainted; that on the opposite side opened into a community-room, where I should probably have found some of the old nuns at that hour, and they would certainly have stopped me. On the left, however, was a large door, both locked and barred: but I gave the door a sudden swing, that it might creak as little as possible, being of iron. Down the stairs I hurried, and making my way through the door into the yard, stepped across it, unbarred the great gate, and was at liberty!

---

## CONCLUSION.

THE following circumstances comprise all that is deemed necessary now to subjoin to the preceding narrative.

After my arrival in New York, I was introduced to the alms-house, where I was attended with kindness and care, and, as I hoped, was entirely unknown. But when I had been some time in that institution, I found that it was reported that I was a fugitive nun; and not long after, an Irish woman, belonging to the house, brought me a secret message which caused me some agitation.

I was sitting in the room of Mrs. Johnson, the matron, engaged in sewing, when that Irish woman, employed in the institution, came in and told me that Mr. Conroy was below, and had sent to see me. I was informed that he was a Roman Priest, who often visited the house, and he had a particular wish to see me at that time; having come, as I believed, expressly for that purpose. I showed unwillingness to comply with such an invitation, and did not go.

The woman told me, further, that he sent me word that I need not think to avoid him, for it would be impossible for me to do so. I might conceal myself as well as I could, but I should be found and taken. No matter where I went, or what hiding place I might choose, I should be known; and I had better come at once. He knew who I was; and he was authorized to take me to the Sisters of Charity, if I should prefer to join them. He would promise that I might stay with them if I choose, and be permitted to remain in New York. He sent me word further that he had received full power and authority over me from the Superior of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery at Montreal, and was able to do all that she could do; as her right to

dispose of me at her will had been imparted to him by a regular writing received from Canada. This was alarming information for me, in the weakness in which I was at that time. The woman added, that the authority had been given to all the priests; so that go where I might I should meet men informed about me and my escape, and fully empowered to seize me whenever they could, and convey me back to the Convent from which I had escaped.

Under these circumstances, it seemed to me that the offer to place me among the Sisters of Charity with permission to remain in New York, was mild and favourable. However, I had resolution enough to refuse to see priest Conroy.

Not long afterwards I was informed, by the same messenger, that the priest was again in the building, and repeated his request. I desired one of the gentlemen connected with the institution, that a stop might be put to such messages, as I wished to receive no more of them. A short time after, however, the woman told me that Mr. Conroy wished to enquire of me, whether my name was not Saint Eustace while a nun, and if I had not confessed to Priest Kelly in Montreal. I answered, that it was all true; for I had confessed to him a short time while in the Nunnery. I was then told again that the priest wanted to see me, and I sent back word that I would see him in the presence of Mr. T— or Mr. S—; which, however, was not agreed to; and I was afterwards informed that Mr. Conroy, the Roman priest, spent an hour in the room and a passage where I had frequently been; but, through the mercy of God, I was employed at another place at that time, and had no occasion to go where I should have met him. I afterwards repeatedly heard that Mr. Conroy continued to visit the house, and to ask for me; but I never saw him. I once had determined to leave the institution, and go to the Sisters of Charity; but circumstances occurred which gave me time for further

reflection: and I was saved from the destruction to which I should have been exposed.

As the period of my accouchment approached, I sometimes thought that I should not survive it; and then the recollection of the dreadful crimes I had witnessed in the Nunnery would come upon me very powerfully, and I would think it a solemn duty to disclose them before I died. To have a knowledge of those things, and leave the world without making them known, appeared to me like a great sin, whenever I could divest myself of the impression made upon me by the declarations and arguments of the Superior, nuns, and priests, of the duty of submitting to everything, and the necessary holiness of whatever they did or required.

The evening but one before the period which I anticipated with so much anxiety, I was sitting alone, and began to indulge in reflections of this kind. It seemed to me that I must be near the close of my life, and I determined to make a disclosure at once. I spoke to Mrs. Ford, a woman whose character I respected, a nurse in the hospital, number twenty-three. I informed her that I had no expectation of living long, and had some things on my mind which I wished to communicate before it should be too late. I added, that I should prefer telling them to Mr. T\_\_\_\_\_, the chaplain; of which she approved, as she considered it a duty to do so, under those circumstances. I had no opportunity, however, to converse with Mr. T. at that time, and, probably, my purpose of disclosing the facts already given in this book, would never have been executed, but for what subsequently took place.

It was alarm which led me to form such a determination; and when the period of trial had been safely passed, and I had a prospect of recovery, anything appeared to me more unlikely than that I should make this exposure.

I was then a Roman Catholic, at least a great part of my time; and my conduct, in a great measure, was

according to the faith and motives of a Roman Catholic. Notwithstanding what I knew of the conduct of so many of the priests and nuns, I thought that it had no effect on the sanctity of the Church, or the authority or effects of the acts performed by the former at the mass, confession, &c. I had such a regard for my vows as a nun, that I considered my hand as well as my heart irrevocably given to Jesus Christ, and could never have allowed any person to take it. Indeed, to this day, I feel an instinctive aversion of offering my hand, or taking the hand of another person, even as an expression of friendship.

I also thought that I might soon return to the Catholics, although fear and disgust held me back. I had now that infant to think for, whose life I had happily saved by my timely escape from the Nunnery; what its fate might be, in case it should ever fall into the power of the priests, I could not tell.

I had, however, reason for alarm. Would a child, destined to destruction, like the infants I had seen baptised and smothered, be allowed to go through the world unmolested, a living memorial of the truth of crimes long practised in security, because never exposed? What pledges could I get to satisfy me, that I, on whom her dependence must be, would be spared by those who, I had reason to think, were wishing then to sacrifice me? How could I trust the helpless infant in hands which had hastened the baptism of many such in order to hurry them into the secret pit in the cellar? Could I suppose that *Father Phelan, Priest of the Parish Church of Montreal*, would see his own child growing up in the world, and feel willing to run the risk of having the truth exposed? What could I expect, especially from him, but the utmost rancour, and the most determined enmity, against the innocent child and its abused and defenceless mother?

Yet, my mind would sometimes still incline in the opposite direction, and indulge the thought, that per-

haps the only way to secure heaven to us both was to throw ourselves back into the hands of the Church, to be treated as she pleased. When, therefore, the fear of immediate death was removed, I renounced all thoughts of communicating the substance of the facts of this volume. It happened, however, that my danger was not passed. I was soon seized with very alarming symptoms; then my desire to disclose my story revived.

I had before had an opportunity to speak in private with the chaplain; but, as it was at a time when I supposed myself out of danger, I had deferred for three days my proposed communication, thinking that I might yet avoid it altogether. When my symptoms, however, became more alarming, I was anxious for Saturday to arrive, the day which I had appointed; and when I had not the opportunity, on that day, which I desired, I thought it might be too late. I did not see him till Monday, when my prospects of surviving were very gloomy, and I then informed him that I wished to communicate to him a few secrets, which were likely otherwise to die with me. I then told him, that while a nun, in the Convent of Montreal, I had witnessed the murder of a nun, called Saint Frances, and of at least one of the infants which I have spoken of in this book. I added some few circumstances, and I believe disclosed, in general terms, some of the crimes I knew of in that Nunnery.

My anticipations of death proved to be unfounded; for my health afterwards improved, and had I not made the confessions on that occasion, it is very possible I never might have made them. I, however, afterwards felt more willing to listen to instruction, and experienced friendly attentions from some of the benevolent persons around me, who, taking an interest in me on account of my darkened understanding, furnished me with the Bible, and were ever ready to counsel me when I desired it.

I soon began to believe that God might have intended

that His creatures should learn His will by reading His Word, and taking upon them the free exercise of their reason, and acting under responsibility to Him.

It is difficult for one who has never given way to such arguments and influences as those to which I had been exposed, to realize how hard it is to think aright, after thinking wrong. The Scriptures always affect me powerfully when I read them; but I feel that I have but just begun to learn the great truths, in which I ought to have been early and thoroughly instructed. I realize, in some degree, how it is, that the Scriptures render the people of the United States so strongly opposed to such doctrines as are taught in the Black and Congregational Nunneries of Montreal. The priests and nuns used often to declare that of all heretics the children from the United States were the most difficult to be converted; and it was thought a great triumph when one of them was brought over to "the true faith." The first passage of Scripture that made any serious impression upon my mind, was the text on which the chaplain preached on the Sabbath after my introduction to the house—"Search the Scriptures."

---

#### EXTRACTS FROM PUBLIC JOURNALS,

##### Confirming MARIA MONK'S DISCLOSURES.

The following Certificate is copied from the  
Protestant Vindicator, March, 1836.

**W**E, the Subscribers, have an acquaintance with Miss Maria Monk, and having considered the evidence of different kinds which has been collected in

relation to her case, have no hesitation in declaring our belief in the truth of the Statements she makes in her book, recently published in New York, entitled "Awful Disclosures," &c.

"We at the same time declare that the assertion, originally made in the Roman Catholic Newspapers of Boston, that the book was copied from a work entitled 'The Gates of Hell Opened,' is wholly destitute of foundation; it being entirely new, and not copied from anything whatsoever.

"And we further declare, that no evidence has been produced which discredits the statements of Miss Monk; while, on the contrary, her story has yet received, and continues to receive, confirmation from various sources.

"During the last week, two important witnesses spontaneously appeared, and offered to give public testimony in her favour. From them the following delineations have been received. The first is an affidavit given by Mr. William Miller, now a resident of this city. The second is a statement received from a young married woman, who, with her husband, also resides here. In the clear and repeated statements made by these two witnesses, we place entire reliance, who are ready to furnish satisfaction to any persons making reasonable

enquiries on the subject.

"W. C. BROWNREE." "AMOS BELDEN," "JOHN J. SLOCUM," "DAVID WESSON," "ANDREW BRUCE," "THOMAS HOGAN," "D. FANSHAW."

*From the American Protestant Vindicator.*

**T**IT was expected that, after Maria Monk's disclosures, an artful attempt would be made to invalidate her testimony—which was done secretly after her

escape from the Hotel Dieu Nunnery, by so altering the appearance of that institution by planking, and bricking, and stoning, as to deceive Col. Stone, who was then requested to examine it for himself and the world. The Col. misrepresented what he saw, he was deceived regarding those alterations by the inmates, who dragged him, as it were, by force through the building during his examination, which was performed in the amazing short space of a few hours. But time is the grand unraveller of mysteries. On the appearance of the book of Miss Monk, the hoodwinked people of Montreal were so surprised and stupefied at finding that the immaculate purity of the Hotel Dieu had been so disparaged, that they *forgot* to think seriously on the subject—but, understanding that the story had gained almost general belief abroad, they, at last, were led to conjecture that perhaps it was partiality that prevented them from believing it at home. General attention, therefore, in Montreal, was directed towards that edifice—and those residing in its immediate vicinity cast a retrospective glance over what they had seen transacted there, between the time at which the 'Disclosures' were published, and the visit of Col. Stone. The result of this investigation has been largely given on the spot to the Rev. Jas. P. Miller, of New York, who visited that city for the purpose of hearing that the truth was gradually coming to light. The neighbours informed Mr. Miller that about the time it was rumoured that she had exposed the institution, a mysterious pile of planks, twenty-five feet in height, had been placed mysteriously in the yard, which were wonderfully and gradually used in progressing some improvements in the building—for they were neither employed outside nor hauled away.

Whatever may be the fact with regard to Maria Monk's alleged disclosures, those of our people who have read your papers, are satisfied in one point: that Mr. Stone's

credibility as a witness has been successfully impeached; that his examination of the Nunnery was a mere sham; that he was either the dupe of Jesuitical imposture, or that he himself is a fond imposter; that he has been unwillingly or ignorantly befooled; and unless he has had a tangible reward, that he has 'got his labour for his pains.'

"Whatever may be the facts in relation to those 'disclosures,' we needed not your paper to satisfy us either that Jesuits must be as holy as the 'Blessed Virgin Mother' herself, or those conventicles of unprotected females are scenes of the most damning character.—A PROTESTANT."

*From the Long Island Star, of Feb. 29th.*

SINCE the publication of our last paper, we have received a communication from Messrs. Howe and Bates, of New York, the publishers of Miss Monk's 'Awful Disclosures.' It appears that some influence has been at work in that city, adverse to the free examination of the case between her and the priests of Canada; for thus far the newspapers have been most entirely closed against everything in her defence, whilst most of them have published false charges against the book, some of a preposterous nature, the contradiction of which is plain and palpable.

"Returning to New York, she then first resolved to publish her story, which she has recently done, after several intelligent disinterested persons had satisfied themselves by much examination that it is true.

"When it became known in Canada that this was her intention, six affidavits were published in some of the newspapers, intended to destroy confidence in her character; but these were found very contradictory in several important points, and in others to afford undesigned confirmation of statements before made by her.

"On the publication of her book, the New York

**Catholic Diary**, the **Truth-teller**, the **Green Banner**, and other papers, made virulent attacks upon it, and one of them proposed that the publishers should be 'lynched.' An anonymous handbill was also circulated in New York, declaring the work a malignant libel, got up by Protestant clergymen, and promising an ample refutation of it in a few days. This was re-published in the **Catholic Diary**, with the old Montreal affidavits, which were distributed through New York and Brooklyn; and on the authority of these, several Protestant newspapers denounced the work as false and malicious.

"Another charge, quite inconsistent with the rest, was made by the leading Roman Catholic papers and others, *viz.*, that it was a mere copy of an old European work. This had been promptly denied by the publishers with the offer of 100 dollars reward for any book at all resembling it.

"Yet such is the resolution of some, and the unbelief of others, that it is impossible for the publishers to obtain insertions for the replies in the New York papers generally, and they have been unsuccessful in an attempt at Philadelphia.

"This is the ground on which the following article has been offered to us, for publication in the **Star**. It was offered to Mr. Schneller, a Roman Priest, and Editor of the **Catholic Diary**, for insertion in his paper of Saturday before last, but refused, although written expressly as an answer to the affidavits and charges his previous number had contained. This article has been refused insertion in a Philadelphia paper, after it had been satisfactorily ascertained that there was no hope of gaining admission for it into any of the New York papers.

"It should be stated, in addition, that the authoress of the book, Maria Monk, is in New York, and stands ready to answer any questions, and submit to any enquiries put in a proper manner, and desires nothing so strongly as an opportunity to prove before a court

the truth of her story. She has already found persons of respectability who have confirmed some of the facts, important and likely to be attested by concurrent evidence; and much further testimony in her favour may be soon expected.

“With these facts before them, intelligent readers will judge for themselves. She asks for investigation, while her opponents deny her every opportunity to meet the charges made against her. Mr. Schneller, after expressing a wish to see her, to the publishers, refused to meet her anywhere, unless in his own house; while Mr. Quarter, another Roman Catholic priest, called to see her, at ten o’clock one night, accompanied by another man, without giving their names, and under the false pretence of being bearers of a letter from her brother in Montreal.”

---

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.

### CHAPTER I.

#### LIBERTY.

I HAVE but a confused idea of the manner in which I got through some of the doors; several of them, I am confident, were fastened, and one or two I fastened behind me. But I was now in the street, and what was to be done next? I had got my liberty; but where

should I go? It was dark, I was in great danger, go which way I would; and for a moment, I thought I had been unwise to leave the Convent. If I could return unobserved, would it not be better? But summoning resolution, I turned to the left, and ran some distance up the street; then reflecting that I had better take the opposite direction, I returned under the same convent walls, and ran as fast down to St. Paul's street, then turning up towards the north, exerted all my strength, and fled for my life. It was a cold evening, but I stopped for nothing, having recollected the house where I had been put to board for a short time, by the priest Roque, when prepared to enter the convent as a novice, and resolved to seek a lodging there for the night. Thither I went. It seemed as if I flew rather than ran. It was by that time so dark that I was able to see distinctly through the low windows, by the light within; and had the pleasure to find that she was alone with her children. I, therefore, went boldly to the door, was received with readiness, and entered to take up my lodgings there once more.

Here I changed my nun's dress for one less likely to excite observation; and having received a few dollars in addition to make up the difference, I retired to rest, determined to rise early and take the morning steam-boat for Quebec. I knew that my hostess was a friend of the Superior, as I have mentioned before, and presumed that it would not be long before she would give information against me. I knew, however, that she could not gain admittance to the convent very early, and felt safe in remaining in the house through the night.

But after I had retired I found it impossible to sleep, and the night appeared very long. In the morning early, I requested that the son of the woman might accompany me to the boat, which he did. At an early hour, therefore, I walked to the steamboat, but learnt, to my regret, that it would not go before night. Fearing that I might fall into the hands of the priests, and

be carried back to the nunnery, and not knowing where to go, I turned away, and determined to seek some retired spot immediately. I walked through a part of the city, and some distance on the Lachine road, when finding a solitary place, I seated myself in much distress of mind, both fearful and anxious, beyond my power of description. I could not think myself safe anywhere in the neighbourhood of Montreal ; for the priests were numerous, and almost all the people were entirely devoted to them. They would be very desirous of finding me, and, as I believed, would make great exertions to get me again in their hands.

It was a pleasant spot where I now found myself, and as the weather was not uncomfortable in the day time, I had nothing to trouble me except my recollections and fears. As for the want of food, that gave me not the slightest uneasiness, as I felt no inclination whatever to eat. The uncertainty and doubts I continually felt, kept me in a state of irresolution the whole day. What should I do? Where should I go? I had not a friend in the world to whom I could go with confidence; while my enemies were numerous, and, it seemed to me, all around me, and ready to seize me. I thought of my uncle, who lived at a distance of five miles; and sometimes I almost determined to set off immediately for his house. I had visited it often when a child, and have been received with the utmost kindness. I remembered that I had been a great favourite of his; but some considerations would arise which discouraged me from looking for safety in that direction. The steamboat was to depart in a few hours. I could venture to pass through the city once more by twilight; and if once arrived at Quebec, I should be at a great distance from the nunnery, in a large city, and among a larger proportion of Protestant inhabitants. Among them I might find friends, or, at least, some sort of protection; and I had no doubt that I could support myself by labour.

Then I thought again of the place I had left; the kindness and sympathy, small though they were, which I had found in some of my late companions in the convent; the awful mortal sin I had committed in breaking my vows; and the terrible punishments I should receive if taken as a fugitive and carried back. If I should return voluntarily, and ask to be admitted again: what would the Superior say, how would she treat me? Should I be condemned to any very severe penance? Might I not, at least, escape death? But then there was one consideration that would now and then occur to me, which excited the strongest determination never to return. I was to become a mother, and the thought of witnessing the murder of my own child was more than I could bear.

Purgatory was doubtless my portion; and perhaps hell forever—such a purgatory and hell as are painted in the convent: but there was one hope for me yet.

I might confess all my deadly sins sometime before I died, and a Bishop could pardon the worst of them.

This was good Catholic doctrine, and I rested upon it with so much hope, that I was not quite driven to despair.

In reflections like these I spent the whole day, afraid to stray from the secluded spot to which I had retreated, though at different times forming momentary plans to leave it, and go in various directions. I ate not a morsel of food, and yet felt no hunger. Had I been well provided, I could have tasted nothing in such a state of mind. The afternoon wasted away, the sun set, and darkness began to come on. I rose and set off again for the city. I passed along the streets unmolested by anyone; and reached it a short time before the boat was ready to start.

---

CHAPTER II.  
DISAPPOINTMENT.

SOON after we left the shore, the captain, whom I had previously seen, appeared to recognize me.

He came up and inquired if I was not the daughter of my mother, mentioning her name. I had long been taught and accustomed to deceive; and it may be supposed that in such a case I did not hesitate to deny the truth, hoping that I might avoid being known, and fearing to be defeated in my object. He, however, persisted that he knew me, and said that he must insist on my returning with him to Montreal, adding that I must not leave his boat to land at Quebec. I said but little to him, but intended to go on shore if possible, at the end of our journey—a thing I had no doubt I might effect.

When we reached Quebec, however, I found, to my chagrin, that the ladies' maid carefully locked the cabin door while I was in, after the ladies had left it, who were six or eight in number.

I said little, and made no attempts to resist the restriction put upon me, but secretly cherished the hope of being able, by watching an opportunity, to slip on shore at tea-time, and lose myself among the streets of the city. Although a total stranger to Quebec, I longed to be at liberty there, as I thought I could soon place myself among persons who would secure me from the Catholics, each of whom I now looked upon as an enemy.

But I soon found that my last hopes were blighted; the maid, having received, as I presumed, strict orders from the captain, kept me closely confined, so that escape was impossible. I was distressed, it is true, to find myself in this condition; but I had already become accustomed to disappointments, and therefore perhaps sunk less under this new one, than I might otherwise have done. When the hour for departure arrived, I

was therefore still confined in the steamboat, and it was not until we had left the shore that I was allowed to leave the cabin. The captain and others treated me with kindness in every respect, except that of permitting me to do what I most desired. I have sometimes suspected that he had received notice of my escape from some of the priests, with a request to stop my flight, if I should go on board his boat. His wife is a Catholic, and this is the only way in which I can account for his conduct: still, I have not sufficient knowledge of his motives and intentions to speak with entire confidence on the subject.

My time passed heavily on board of the steam-boat, particularly on my passage up the river towards Montreal. My mind was too much agitated to allow me to sleep, for I was continually meditating on the scenes I had witnessed in the convent, and anticipating with dread such as I had reason to think I might soon be called to pass through, I bought for a trifle while on board, I hardly know why, a small medallion with a head upon it, and the name of Robertson, which I hung upon my neck. As I sat by day with nothing to do, I occasionally sunk into a doze for a few minutes, when I usually waked with a start from some frightful dream. Sometimes I thought I was running away from the priests, and closely pursued, and sometimes had no hope of escape. But the most distressing of my feelings were those I suffered in the course of the night. We stopped some time at Berthier, where a number of prisoners were taken on board to be carried up the river; and this caused much confusion, and added to my painful reflections.

My mind became much agitated, worse than it had been before; and what between waking fears, and sleeping visions, I spent a most wretched night. Sometimes I thought the priests and nuns had me shut up in a dungeon: sometimes they were about to make away with me in a most cruel manner. Once I

dreamed that I was in some house, and a coach came up to the door, into which I was to be put by force; and the man who seized me and was putting me in, had no head.

When we reached Montreal on Saturday morning it was not daylight; and the captain, landing, set off, as I understood, to give my mother information that I was in his boat. He was gone a long time, which led to conjectures that he might have found difficulty in speaking with her; but the delay proved very favourable to me, for perceiving that I was neither locked up nor watched, I hastened on shore, and pursued my way into the city. I felt happy at my escape: but what was I then to do? Whither could I go? Not to my mother; I was certain I could not remain long with her, without being known to the priests.

My friendlessness and utter helplessness, with the dread of being murdered in the convent, added to the thoughts of the shame that must await me if I lived a few months, made me take a desperate resolution, and I hurried to put it into effect.

My object was to reach the head of the Lachine canal, which is near the St. Lawrence, beyond the extremity of the southern suburbs. I walked hastily along St. Paul's street, and found all the houses still shut; then turning to the old Recollet church, I reached Notre Dame street, which I followed in the direction I wished to go.

The morning was chilly, as the season was somewhat advanced; but that was of no importance to me. Day had appeared, and I desired to accomplish the object on which I was now bent, before the light should much increase. I walked on, therefore, but the morning had broken bright before I arrived at the canal; and then I found, to my disappointment, that two Canadians were at work on the bank, getting water, or doing something else.

I was by the great basin where the boats start, and

near the large canal storehouse. I had not said what was my design: it was to drown myself.

Fearing the men would rescue me, I hesitated for some time, hoping they would retire: but finding that they would not, I grew impatient. I stood looking on the water; it was nearly on a level with the banks, which shelved away, as I could perceive for some distance, there being no wind to disturb the surface. There was nothing in the sight which seemed frightful or even forbidding to me; I looked upon it as the means of the easiest death, and longed to be buried below. At length finding that the men were not likely to leave the place, I sprang from the bank, and was in an instant in the cold water. The shock was very severe. I felt a sharp freezing sensation run through me, which almost immediately rendered me insensible; and the last thing I can recollect was, that I was sinking in the midst of water almost as cold as ice, which wet my clothes, and covered me all over.

---

## CHAPTER III.

## AMONG STRANGERS.

HOW long I remained in the canal I know not; but in about three minutes, as I conjectured, I felt a severe blow on my right side, and opening my eyes I saw myself surrounded by men who talked a great deal, and expressed much anxiety and curiosity about me. They inquired of me my name, where I lived, and why I had thrown myself into the water; but I would not answer a word. The blow which I had felt, and which was probably the cause of bringing me for a few moments to my senses, I presume was caused by falling, after I was rescued, upon the stones, which lay thickly scattered near the water. I remember that the persons around me continued to press me with questions, and that I still remained silent. Some of them having observed the little medallion on my neck, and being able to read, declared that I was probably a daughter of Dr. Robertson, as it bore the name; but to this I also gave no answer, and sunk again into a state of unconsciousness.

When my senses once more returned, I found myself lying in a bed covered up warm, in a house, and heard several persons talking of the mass, from which they had just returned. I could not imagine where I was, for my thoughts were not easily collected, and everything seemed strange around me. Some of them on account of the name on the little medallion, had sent to Dr. Robertson, to inform him that a young woman had been prevented from drowning herself in the basin, who had a portrait on her neck, with his family name stamped upon it; and he had sent word that although

she could be no relation of his, they had better bring her to his house, as he possibly might be able to learn who she was. Preparations were therefore made to conduct me thither; and I was soon in his house. This was about midday, or a little later.

The doctor endeavoured to draw from me some confession of my family; but I refused; my feelings would not permit me to give him any satisfaction. He offered to send me to my home if I would tell him where I lived; but at length, thinking me unreasonable and obstinate, began to threaten to send me to jail.

In a short time I found that the latter measure was determined on, and I was soon put into the hands of the jailer, Captain Holland, and placed in a private room in his house.

I had formerly been acquainted with his children, but had such strong reasons for remaining unknown that I hoped they would not recognize me and, as we had not met for several years, I flattered myself that such would be the case. It was, at first, as I had hoped; they saw me in the evening, but did not appear to suspect who I was.

The next morning, however, one of them asked me if I were not sister of my brother, mentioning his name, and though I denied it, they all insisted that I must be, for the likeness, they said, was surprisingly strong. I still would not admit the truth; but requested they would send for the Rev. Mr. Esson, a Presbyterian clergyman in Montreal, saying I had something to say to him. He soon made his appearance, and I gave him some account of myself, and requested him to procure my release from confinement, as I thought there was no reason why I should be deprived of my liberty.

Contrary to my wishes, however, he went and informed my mother. An unhappy difference had existed between us for many years, concerning which I would not speak, were it not necessary to allude to it, to render some things intelligible which are important to my

narrative. I am willing to bear much of the blame, for my drawing part of the pension had justly irritated her. I shall not attempt to justify or explain my own feelings with respect to my mother, whom I still regard, at least in some degree, as I ought, I will merely say that I thought she indulged in partialities and antipathies in her family during my childhood, and that I attribute my entrance into the nunnery, and the misfortunes I have suffered, to my early estrangement from home, and my separation from the family. I had neither seen her nor heard from her for several years; and knew not whether she had even known of my entrance into the convent, although I now learnt that she still resided where she formerly did.

It was therefore with regret that I heard that my mother had been informed of my condition; and that I saw an Irishwoman, an acquaintance of hers, come to take me to the house. I had no doubt that she would think that I had disgraced her, by being imprisoned, as well as by my attempt to drown myself; and what would be her feelings towards me, I could only conjecture.

I accompanied the woman to my mother's, and found nearly such a reception as I had expected. Notwithstanding our mutual feelings were much as they had been, she wished me to stay with her, and kept me in one of her rooms for several weeks, and with the utmost privacy, fearing that my appearance would lead to questions, and that my imprisonment would become known.

I soon satisfied myself that she knew little of what I had passed through, within the few past years; and did not think it prudent to inform her, for that would greatly have increased the risk of my being discovered by the priests. We were surrounded by those who went frequently to confession, and would have thought me a monster of wickedness, guilty of breaking the most solemn vows, and a fugitive from a retreat which is generally regarded there as a place of great sanctity,

and almost like a gate to heaven. I well knew the ignorance and prejudices of the poor Canadians, and understood how such a person as myself must appear in their eyes. They felt as I formerly had, and would think it a service to religion and to God to betray the place of my concealment, if by chance they should find, or even suspect it. As I had become in the eyes of Catholics, "a spouse of Jesus Christ," by taking the veil, my leaving the convent must appear to them a forsaking of the Saviour.

As things were, however, I remained for some time undisturbed. My brother, though he lived in the house did not know of my being there for a fortnight.

When he learnt it, and came to see me he expressed much kindness towards me: but I had not seen him for several years, and had seen so much evil, that I knew not what secret motives he might have, and thought it prudent to be reserved. I, therefore, communicated to him nothing of my history or intentions, and rather repulsed his advances. The truth is, I had been so long among nuns and priests, that I thought there was no sincerity or virtue on earth.

What were my mother's wishes or intentions towards me, I was not informed: but I found afterwards, that she must have made arrangements to have me removed from her house, for one day a woman came to the door with a carriage, and on being admitted to see me, expressed herself in a friendly manner, spoke of the necessity of air and exercise for my health, and invited me to take a ride. I consented, supposing we should soon return; but when we reached St. Antoine suburbs, she drove up to a house which I had formerly heard to be some kind of refuge, stopped, and requested me to alight. My first thought was, that I should be exposed to certain detection, by some of the priests whom I presumed officiated there; as they had all known me in the nunnery. I could not avoid entering; but I resolved to feign sickness, hoping thus to be placed

out of sight of the priests.

The result was according to my wishes: for I was taken to an upper room, which was used as an infirmary and there permitted to remain. There were a large number of women in the house; and a Mrs. M'Donald, who has the management of it, had her daughters in the Ursuline Nunnery at Quebec, and her son in the College. The nature of the establishment I could not fully understand: but it seemed to me designed to become a nunnery at some future time.

I felt pretty safe in the house, as long as I was certain of remaining in the infirmary; for there was nobody there who had ever seen me before. But I resolved to avoid, if possible, ever making my appearance below, for I felt that I could not do so without hazard of discovery.

Among other appendages of a convent, which I observed in that place, was a confessional within the building, and I soon learnt, to my dismay, that Father Bonin, one of the murderers of Saint Frances, was in the habit of constant attendance ~~as~~ priest and confessor. The recollections which I often indulged in of scenes in the Hotel Dieu, gave me uneasiness and distress: but not knowing where to go to seek greater seclusion, I remained in the infirmary week after week, still affecting illness in the best manner I could.

At length I found that I was suspected of playing off a ~~de~~ception with regard to the state of my health; and at the close of a few weeks, I became satisfied that I could not remain longer without making my appearance below stairs. I at length complied with the wishes I heard expressed, that I would go into the community-room, where those in health were accustomed to reassemble at work, and then some of the women began to talk of my going to confession.

I merely expressed unwillingness at first: but when they pressed the point, and began to insist, my fear of detection overcame every other feeling, and I plainly

declared that I would not go. This led to an altercation, when the mistress of the house pronounced me incorrigible, and said she would not keep me for a hundred pounds a year. She, in fact, became so weary of having me there, that she sent to my mother to take me away.

My mother, in consequence, sent a carriage for me, and took me again into her house; but I became so unhappy in a place where I was secluded and destitute of all agreeable society, that I earnestly requested her to allow me to leave Canada. I believe she felt ready to have me removed to a distance, that she might not be in danger of having my attempt at self-destruction, and my confinement in prison made public.

There was a fact which I had not disclosed, and of which all were ignorant: viz., that which had so much influence in exciting me to leave the convent, and to reject every idea of returning to it.

When conversing with my mother about leaving Canada, I proposed to go to New York. She inquired why I wished to go there. I made no answer to that question; for though I had never been there, and knew scarcely anything about the place, I presumed that I should find protection from my enemies, as I knew it was in a Protestant country. I had not thought of going to the United States before, because I had no one to go with me, nor money enough to pay my expenses; but then a plan presented itself to my mind, by which I thought I might proceed to New York in safety.

There was a man who I presumed would wish to have me leave Canada, on his own account; and that was the man I had so precipitately married while residing at St. Denis. He must have had motives, as I thought, for wishing me at a distance. I proposed, therefore, that he should be informed that I was in Montreal, and anxious to go to the States, and such a message was sent to him by a woman whom my mother knew. She had a little stand for the sale of some articles, and had

a husband who carried on some similar kind of business at the Scotch mountain. Through her husband, as I suppose, she had my message conveyed, and soon informed me that arrangements were made for my commencing my journey, under the care of the person to whom it had been sent.

---

## CHAPTER IV.

## ESCAPE TO UNITED STATES.

IT is remarkable that I was able to stay so long in the midst of Catholics without discovery, and at last obtain the aid of some of them in effecting my flight. There is probably not a person in Montreal who would sooner have betrayed me into the power of the priests than that woman, if she had known my history.

She was a frequent visitor at the Convent and the Seminary, and had a ticket which entitled her every Monday to the gift of a loaf of bread from the former. She had an unbounded respect for the Superior and the priests, and seized every opportunity to please them. Now the fact that she was willing to take measures to facilitate my departure from Montreal, afforded sufficient evidence to me of her entire ignorance of myself, in all respects in which I could wish her to be ignorant; and I confided in her, because I perceived that she felt no stronger motive, than a disposition to oblige my mother.

Should anything occur to let her into the secret of my being a fugitive from the Black Nunnery, I knew that I could not trust to her kindness for an instant. The discovery of that fact would transform her into a bitter and deadly enemy. She would at once regard me as guilty of mortal sin, an apostate, and a proper object of persecution. And this was a reflection I had often reason to make, when thinking of the numerous Catholics around me. How important, then, the keep-

ing of my secret, and my escape before the truth should become known, even to a single person near me.

I could realize, from the dangers through which I was brought by the hand of God, how difficult it must be, in most cases, for a fugitive from a nunnery to obtain her final freedom from the power of her enemies. Even if escaped from a convent, so long as she remains among Catholics, she is in constant exposure to be informed against especially if the news of her escape is made public, which fortunately was not the fact in my case.

If a Catholic comes to the knowledge of any fact calculated to expose such a person, he will think it his duty to disclose it at confession; and then the whole fraternity will be in motion to seize her.

How happy for me that not a suspicion was entertained concerning me, and that not a whisper against me was breathed into the ear of a single priest at confession!

Notwithstanding my frequent appearance in the streets, my removals from place to place, and the various exposures I had to discovery, contrary to my fears, which haunted me even in my dreams, I was preserved; and as I have often thought, for the purpose of making the disclosures contained in this volume. No power but that of God, as I have frequently thought, could ever have led me in safety through so many dangers.

I would not have my readers imagine, however, that I had at that period any thought of making known my history to the world. I wished to plunge into the deepest possible obscurity; and next to the fear of falling into the hands of the priests and Superior, I shrank most from the idea of having others acquainted with the scenes I had passed through. Such a thought as publishing never entered my mind till months after that time. My desire was that I might

name and my shame might perish on earth together. As for my future doom, I still looked forward to it with gloomy apprehensions : for I considered myself as almost, if not quite, removed beyond the reach of mercy. During all the time which had elapsed since I left the convent, I had received no religious instruction, nor even read a word of the Scriptures; and, therefore, it is not wonderful that I should still have remained under the delusions in which I had been educated.

The plan arranged for the commencement of my journey was this: I was to cross the St. Lawrence to Longueuil, to meet the man who was to accompany me. The woman who had sent my message into the country, went with me to the ferry, and crossed the river, where, according to appointment, we found my companion. He willingly undertook to accompany me to the place of my destination, and at his own expense; but declared that he was apprehensive we should be pursued. To avoid the priests who he supposed would follow us, he took an indirect route, and during about twelve days, or nearly that, which we spent on the way, passed over a much greater distance than was necessary. It would be needless, if it were possible, to mention all the places we visited. We crossed Carpenter's ferry, and were at Scotch Mountain and St. Alban's; arrived at Champlain by land, and there took the steamboat, leaving it again at Burlington.

As we were riding towards Charlotte, my companion entertained fears which, to me, appeared ridiculous; but it was impossible for me to reason him out of them, or to hasten our journey. Circumstances which appeared to me of no moment whatever, would often influence and sometimes make him change his whole plan and direction. As we were one day approaching Charlotte, for instance, on inquiring of a person on the way whether there were any Canadians there, and being informed that there were not a few, and that there was a

Roman Catholic priest residing there, he immediately determined to avoid the place, and turn back, although we were then only about nine miles distant from it.

During several of the first nights after leaving Montreal, he suffered greatly from fear; and on meeting me in the morning, repeatedly said: "Well, thank God, we are safe so far!" When we arrived at Whitehall he had an idea that we should run a risk of meeting priests, who, he thought, were in search of us, if we went immediately on; and insisted that we had better stay there a little, until they should have passed. In spite of my anxiety to proceed, we accordingly remained there about a week, when we entered a canal-boat to proceed to Troy.

An unfortunate accident happened to me while on our way. I was in the cabin, when a gun, which had been placed near me, was started from its place by the motion of the boat, caused by another boat running against it, and striking me on my left side, threw me to some distance. The shock was violent, and I thought myself injured, and hoped the effects would soon pass off. I was afterwards taken with vomiting blood; and this alarming symptom several times returned: but I was able to keep up.

We came, without any unnecessary delay, from Troy to New York, where we arrived in the morning, either on Thursday or Friday, as I believe; but my companion there disappeared without informing me where he was going, and I saw him no more. Being now, as I presumed, beyond the reach of my enemies, I felt relief from the fear of being carried back to the nunnery, and sentenced to death or the cells; but I was in a large city where I had not a friend. Feeling overwhelmed with my miserable condition, I longed for death; and yet I felt no desire to make another attempt to destroy myself.

On the contrary, I determined to seek some solitary retreat, and await God's time to remove me from a

world in which I had found so much trouble, hoping and believing that it would not be long.

Not knowing which way to go to find solitude, I spoke to a little boy whom I saw on the wharf, and told him I would give him some money if he would lead me into the "*bush*." (This is the common word by which, in Canada, we speak of the woods or forests). When he understood what I meant, he told me that there was no *bush* about New York; but consented to lead me to the most lonely place that he knew of. He accordingly set off, and I followed him, on a long walk to the upper part of the city, and beyond, until we reached the outskirts of it. Turning off from the road, we gained a little hollow, where were a few trees and bushes, a considerable distance from any house; and there, he told me, was the loneliest place with which he was acquainted. I paid him for his trouble out of the small stock of money I had in my possession, and let him go home, desiring him to come the next day, and bring me something to eat, with a few pennies which I gave him.

---

## CHAPTER V.

## REFLECTIONS.

**T**HREE I found myself once more alone, and truly it was a great relief to sit down and feel that I was out of reach of the priests and nuns, and in a spot where I could patiently wait for death, when God might please to send it, instead of being abused and tormented according to the caprices and passions of my persecutors.

But then again returned most bitter anticipations of the future. Life had no attractions for me, for it must be connected with shame ; but death, under any circumstances, could not be divested of horrors, so long as I believed in the doctrines relating to it which had been inculcated upon me.

The place where I had taken up, as I supposed, my last earthly abode, was pleasant in clear and mild weather ; and I spent most of my time in as much peace as the state of my mind would permit. I saw houses, but no human beings, except on the side of a little hill near by, where were some men at work, making sounds like those made in hammering stone. The shade around me was so thick that I felt assured of being sufficiently protected from observation if I kept still ; and a cluster of bushes offered me a shelter for the night. As evening approached I was somewhat alarmed by the sound of voices near me, and found that a number of labourers were passing that way from their work. I went in a fright to the thickest of the bushes, and lay down until all was again still, and then ventured out to take my seat again on the turf.

Darkness now came gradually on; and with it fears of another description. The thought struck me that there might be wild beasts in that neighbourhood, ignorant as I then was of the country; and the more I thought of it, the more I became alarmed. I heard no alarming sound, it is true; but I knew not how soon some prowling ferocious beast might come upon me in my defenceless condition, and tear me in pieces. I retired to my bushes, and stretched myself under them upon the ground: but I found it impossible to sleep; and my mind was continually agitated by thoughts on the future or the past.

In the morning the little boy made his appearance again, and brought me a few cakes which he had purchased for me. He showed much interest in me, inquired why I did not live in a house; and it was with difficulty that I could satisfy him to let me remain in my solitary and exposed condition. Understanding that I wished to continue unknown, he assured me that he had not told even his mother about me; and I had reason to believe that he faithfully kept my secret to the last. Though he lived a considerable distance from my hiding place, and, as I supposed, far down in the city, he visited me almost every day, even when I had not desired him to bring me anything. Several times I received from him some small supplies of food for the money I had given him. I once gave him a half-dollar to get changed; and he brought me back every penny of it, at his next visit.

As I had got my drink from a brook or pool, which was at no great distance, he brought me a little cup one day to drink out of; but this I was not allowed to keep long, for he soon after told me that his mother wanted it, and he must return it. He several times arrived quite out of breath, and when I inquired the reason, calling him as I usually did, "Little Tommy," he said it was necessary for him to run, and to stay but a short time, that he might be at school in good season. Thus

he continued to serve me, and keep my secret, at great inconvenience to himself, up to the last day of my stay in that retreat; and I believe he would have done so for three months if I had remained there. I should like to see him again, and hear his broken English.

I had now abundance of time to reflect on my lost condition; and many a bitter thought passed through my mind, as I sat on the ground, or strolled about by day, and lay under the bushes at night.

Sometimes I reflected on the doctrines I had heard at the nunnery, concerning sins and penances, Purgatory and Hell; and sometimes on my late companions and the crimes I had witnessed in the convent.

Sometimes I would sit and seriously consider how I might best destroy my life; and sometimes would sing a few of the hymns with which I was familiar; but I never felt willing or disposed to pray, as I supposed there was no hope of mercy for me.

One of the first nights I spent in that houseless condition was stormy; and though I crept under the thickest of the bushes, and had more protection against the rain than one might have expected, I was almost entirely wet before morning; and, it may be supposed, passed a more uncomfortable night than usual. The next day I was happy to find the weather clear, and was able to dry my garments by taking off one at a time, and spreading them on the bushes. A night or two after, however, I was again exposed to a heavy rain, and had the same process afterward to go through with; but what is remarkable, I took no cold on either occasion; nor did I suffer any lasting injury from all the exposures I underwent in that place. The inconveniences I had to encounter, also, appeared to me of little importance, not being sufficient to draw off my mind from its own trouble; and I had no intention of seeking a more comfortable abode, still looking forward only to dying as soon as God would permit, alone and in that spot.

One day, however, when I had been there about ten days, I was alarmed at seeing four men approaching me. All of them had guns, as if out on a shooting excursion. They expressed much surprise and pity on finding me there, and pressed me with questions. I would not give them any satisfactory account of myself, my wants, or intentions, being only anxious that they might withdraw. I found them, however, too much interested to render me some service to be easily sent away; and after some time, thinking there would be no other way, I pretended to go away not to return. After going some distance, and remaining some time, thinking they had left the place, I returned; but to my mortification found they had concealed themselves to see whether I would come back. They now, more urgently than before, insisted on my removing to some other place, where I might be comfortable. They continued to question me; but I became distressed in a degree I cannot describe, hardly knowing what I did. At last I called the oldest gentleman aside, and told him something of my history. He expressed great interest for me, offered to take me anywhere I would tell him, and at last insisted that I should go with him to his own house. All these offers I refused; on which one proposed to take me to the Almshouse, and even to carry me by force if I would not go willingly.

To this I at length consented; but some delay took place, and I became unwilling, so that with reluctance I was taken to that institution, which was about half a mile distant.

---

## CHAPTER VI.

## RECEPTION AT THE ALMSHOUSE.

I WAS now at once made comfortable, and attended with kindness and care. It is not to be expected in such a place, where so many poor and suffering people are collected, and duties of a difficult nature are to be daily performed by those engaged in the care of the institution, that petty vexations should not occur to individuals of all descriptions.

But in spite of all, I received kindness and sympathy from several persons around me, to whom I feel thankful.

I was standing one day at the window of the room number twenty-six, which is at the end of the hospital building, when I saw a spot I once visited in a little walk I took from my hiding-place. My feelings were different now in some respects, from what they had been; for, though I suffered much from my fears of my future punishment for the sin of breaking convent vows, I had given up the intention of destroying my life. (Maria Monk here repeats her confession to the Rev. Mr. Tappin, Chaplain of the Almshouse, as in pages 136 to 141.)

I made some hasty notes of the thoughts to which it gave rise in my mind, and often recurred to the subject. Yet I sometimes questioned the justice of the views I began to entertain, and was ready to condemn myself for giving my mind any liberty to seek for information concerning the foundation of my former faith.

---

## CHAPTER VII.

## A JOURNEY BACK TO MONTREAL

**A**BOUT a fortnight after I had made the disclosures mentioned in the last chapter, Mr. Hoyt called at the Hospital to make inquiries about me. I was introduced to him by Mr. Tappin. After some conversation, he asked me if I would consent to visit Montreal, and give my evidence against the priests and nuns before a court. I immediately expressed my willingness to do so, on condition that I should be protected. It immediately occurred to me, that I might enter the Nunnery at night, and bring out the nuns in the cells, and possibly Jane Ray, and that they would confirm my testimony.

In a short time arrangements were made for our journey. I was furnished with clothes; and although my strength was as yet but partially restored, I set off in pretty good spirits.

Our journey was delayed for a little time, by Mr. Hoyt's waiting to get a companion. He had engaged a clergyman to accompany us, as I understood, who was prevented from going by unexpected business. We went to Troy in a steamboat; and, while there, I had several interviews with some gentlemen who were informed of my history, and wished to see me. They appeared to be deeply impressed with the importance of my testimony; and on their recommendation it was determined that we should go to St. Alban's on our way to Montreal, to get a gentleman to accompany us, whose advice and assistance, as an experienced lawyer,

were thought to be desirable to us in prosecuting the plan we had in view, viz., the exposure of the crimes with which I was acquainted.

We travelled from Troy to Whitehall in a canal packet, because the easy motion was best adapted to my state of health. We met, on board, the Rev. Mr. Sprague, of New York, with whom Mr. Hoyt was acquainted, and whom he tried to persuade to accompany us to Montreal.

From Whitehall to Burlington we proceeded in a steamboat; and there I was so much indisposed, that it was necessary to call a physician. After a little rest, we set off in the stage for St. Alban's; and on arriving, found that Judge Turner was out of town. We had to remain a day or two before he returned; and then he said it would be impossible for him to accompany us. After some deliberation, it was decided that Mr. Hunt should go to Montreal with us, and that Judge Turner should follow and join us there as soon as his health and business would permit.

We therefore crossed the lake by the ferry to Plattsburg, where, after some delay, we embarked in a steamboat, which took us to St. John's. Mr. Hunt, who had not reached the ferry early enough to cross with us, had proceeded on to \* \* \*, and there got on board the steamboat in the night. We went on to Laprairie with little delay, but finding that no boat was to cross the St. Lawrence at that place during the day, we had to take another private carriage to Longueuil, whence we were rowed across to Montreal by three men, in a small boat.

I had felt quite bold and resolute when I first consented to go to Montreal, and also during my journey: but when I stepped on shore in the city, I thought of the different scenes I had witnessed there, and of the risks I might run before I should leave it. We got into a caleche, and rode along towards the hotel where we were to stop. We passed up St. Paul's Street; and,

although it was dusk, I recognized everything I had known.

We came at length to the nunnery; and then many recollections crowded upon me. First I saw a window from which I had sometimes looked at some of the distant houses in that street; and I wondered whether some of my old acquaintances were employed as formerly. But I thought that if I were once within those walls, I should soon be in the cells for the remainder of my life, or perhaps be condemned to something still more severe. I remembered the murder of St. Frances, and the whole scene returned to me as if it had just taken place; the appearance, language and conduct of the persons most active in her destruction. These persons were now all near me, and would use all exertions they safely might, to get me again into their power.

And certainly they had greater reason to be exasperated against me, than against that poor helpless nun who had only expressed a wish to escape.

When I found myself safely in Goodenough's hotel, in a retired room, and began to think alone, the most gloomy apprehensions filled my mind. I could not eat, I had no appetite, and I did not sleep all night. Every painful scene I had ever passed through, seemed to return to my mind; and such was my agitation, I could fix my thoughts upon nothing particular. I had left New York when the state of my health was far from being established; and my strength, as may be presumed, was now much reduced by the fatigue of travelling. I shall be able to give but a faint idea of the feelings with which I passed that night, but must leave it to the imagination of my readers.

Now once more in the neighbourhood of the convent, and surrounded by the nuns and priests, of whose conduct I had made the first disclosures ever known, surrounded by thousands of persons devoted to them, and ready to proceed to any outrage, as I feared, whenever their interference might be desired, there was abundant

reason for my uneasiness.

I now began to realize that I had some attachment to life remaining. When I consented to visit the city, and furnish the evidence necessary to lay open the iniquity of the convent, I had felt, in a measure, indifferent to life; but now, when torture and death seemed at hand, I shrank from it. For myself, life could not be said to be of much value. How could I be happy with such things to reflect upon as I had passed through? and how could I enter society with gratification? But my infant I could not abandon, for who would care for it if its mother died?

I was left alone in the morning by the gentlemen who had accompanied me, as they went to take immediate measures to open the intended investigation. Being alone, I thought of my own position in every point of view, until I became more agitated than ever. I tried to think what persons I might safely apply to as friends; and, though still undecided what to do, I arose, thinking it would be unsafe to remain any longer exposed, as I imagined myself, to be known and seized by my enemies.

I went from the hotel, hurried along, feeling as if I were on my way to some asylum, and thinking I would first go to the house where I had several times previously found a temporary refuge. I did not stop to reflect that the woman was a devoted Catholic and friend to the Superior; but thought only of her kindness to me on former occasions, and hastened along Notre Dame street. But I was approaching the Seminary; and a resolution was suddenly formed to go and ask pardon and intercession of the Superior. Then the character of Bishop Lartigue seemed to present an impossible obstacle; and the disagreeable aspect and harsh voice of the man, as I recalled him, struck me with horror. I recollect him as I had known him when engaged in scenes concealed from the eye of the world. The thought of him made me

decide not to enter the Seminary. I hurried, therefore, by the door; and the great church being at hand, my next thought was to enter there. I reached the steps, walked in, dipped my finger into the holy water, crossed myself, turned to the first image I saw, which was that of Saint Magdalen, threw myself upon my knees, and began to repeat prayers with the utmost fervour. I am certain that I never felt a greater desire to find relief from any of the Saints; but my agitation hardly seemed to subside during my exercise, which continued, perhaps, a quarter of an hour or more. I then rose from my knees, and placed myself under the protection of St. Magdalen and St. Peter by these words: "Je me mets sous votre protection"—(I place myself under your protection;) and added, "Sainte Marie, mere du bon pasteur, prie pour moi"—(Holy Mary, mother of the good shepherd, pray for me.)

I then resolved to call once more at the house where I had found a retreat after my escape from the nunnery, and proceeded along the streets in that direction. On my way, I had to pass a shop kept by a woman I formerly had an acquaintance with. She happened to see me passing, and immediately said, "Maria, is that you? Come in."

I entered, and she soon proposed to me to let her go and tell my mother that I had returned to the city. To this I objected. I went with her, however, to the house of one of her acquaintances near by, where I remained some time, during which she went to my mother's and came with a request from her, that I would have an interview with her, proposing to come up and see me, and saying that she had something very particular to say to me. What this was, I could not with any certainty conjecture. I had my suspicions that it might be something from the priests designed to get me back into their power, or, at least, to suppress my testimony.

I felt an extreme repugnance to seeing my mother,

and in the distressing state of apprehension and uncertainty in which I was, could determine on nothing, except to avoid her. I therefore soon left the house, and walked on without any particular object. The weather was then very unpleasant, and it was raining incessantly. To this I was very indifferent, and walked on till I had got through the suburbs, and found myself beyond the windmills. Then I returned, and passed back through the city, still not recognized by anybody.

I once saw one of my brothers, unless I was much mistaken, and thought he knew me. If it was he, I am confident he avoided me, and that was my belief at the time, as he went into the yard with the appearance of much agitation. I continued to walk up and down most of the day, fearful of stopping anywhere, lest I should be recognized by my enemies, or betrayed into their power. I felt all the distress of a feeble, terrified woman, in need of protection, and, as I thought, without a friend in whom I could safely confide. It distressed me extremely to think of my poor babe; and I had now been so long absent from it, as necessarily to suffer much inconvenience.

I recollect to have been told in the New York Hospital, that laudanum would relieve distress both bodily and mentally, by a woman who urged me to make a trial of it. In my despair, I resolved to make an experiment with it, and entering an apothecary's shop, asked for some. The apothecary refused to give me any; but an old man who was there told me to come in, inquired where I had been, and what was the matter with me, seeing that I was quite wet through. I let him know that I had an infant, and on his urging me to tell more, I told him where my mother lived. He went out, and soon after returned, accompanied by my mother, who told me she had my child at home, and pressed me to go to her house and see it, saying she would not insist on my entering, but would bring it out

to me.

I consented to accompany her; but on reaching the door, she began to urge me to go in, saying I would not be known to the rest of the family, but might stay there in perfect privacy. I was resolved not to comply with this request, and resisted all her entreaties, though she continued to urge me for a long time, perhaps half an hour. At length she went in, and I walked away, in a state no less desperate than before. Indeed, night was approaching, the rain continued, and I had no prospect of food, rest, or even shelter. I went on till I reached the parade-ground, unnoticed, I believe, by anybody, except one man, who asked where I was going, but to whom I gave no answer. I had told my mother, before she left me, that she might find me in the parade-ground. There I stopped, in a part of the open ground where there was no probability of my being observed, and stood thinking of the many distressing things which harassed me; suffering, indeed from exposure to wet and cold, but indifferent to them as evils of mere trifling importance, and expecting that death would soon ease me of my present sufferings. I had hoped that my mother would bring my babe to me there; but as it was growing late, I gave up all expectations of seeing her.

At length she came, accompanied by Mr. Hoyt, who, as I afterwards learnt, had called on her after my leaving the hotel, and at her request, had entrusted my child to her care. Calling again after I had left her house, she had informed him that she now knew where I was, and consented to lead him to the spot. I was hardly able to speak or to walk, in consequence of the hardships I had undergone; but being taken to a small inn, and put under the care of several women, I was made comfortable with a change of clothes and a warm bed.

---

## CHAPTER VIII.

## PAPAL DENUNCIATIONS.

IN the morning I received an invitation to go to the house of a respectable Protestant, an old inhabitant of the city, who had been informed of my situation; and although I felt hardly able to move, I proceeded thither in a carriage, and was received with a degree of kindness, and treated with such care, that I must ever retain a lively gratitude towards the family.

On Saturday I had a visit from Doctor Robertson, to whose house I had been taken soon after my rescue from drowning. He put a few questions to me and soon withdrew.

On Monday, after the close of mass, a Canadian man came in, and entered into conversation with the master of the house in an adjoining room. He was, as I understood, a journeyman carpenter, and a Catholic, and having heard that a fugitive nun was somewhere in the city, began to speak on the subject in French. I was soon informed that Father Phelan had just addressed his congregation with much apparent excitement about myself; and thus the carpenter had received his information. Father Phelan's words, according to what I heard said by numerous witnesses, at different times, must have been much like the following:—

"There is a certain nun now in this city, who has left our faith, and joined the Protestants. She has a child, of which she is ready to swear I am the father. She would be glad in this way to take away my gown from me. If I knew where to find her I would put her in

prison. I mention this to guard you against being deceived by what she may say. The devil has such a hold upon people now-a-days, that there is danger that some might believe her story."

Before he concluded his speech, as was declared, he burst into tears, and appeared to be quite overcome. When the congregation had been dismissed, a number of them came round him, and he told some of them that I was Antichrist; I was not a human being, as he was convinced, but an evil spirit, who had got among the Catholics, and being admitted into the nunnery, where I had learnt the rules so that I could repeat them. My appearance, he declared, was a fulfilment of prophecy, as Antichrist is foretold to be coming, in order to break down, if possible, the Catholic religion.

The journeyman carpenter had entered the house where I lodged under these impressions, and had conversed some time on the subject, without any suspicion that I was near. After he had railed against me with such violence, as I afterwards learned, the master of the house informed him that he knew something of the nun, and mentioned that she charged the priests of the Seminary with crimes of an awful character; in reply to which the carpenter expressed the greatest disbelief.

"You can satisfy yourself," said the master of the house, "if you will take the trouble to step upstairs, for she lives in my family."

"I see her!" he exclaimed—"No, I would not see the wretched creature for anything. I wonder you are not afraid to have her in your house.—She will bewitch you all.—The evil spirit!"

After some persuasion, however, he came into the room where I was sitting, but looked at me with every appearance of dread and curiosity: and his exclamations, and subsequent conversation, in Canadian French, were very ludicrous.

"Eh bin," he began on first seeing me, "c'est ici la malheureuse?" (Well, is this the poor creature?) But

he stood at a distance, and looked at me with curiosity and evident fear. I asked him to sit down, and tried to make him feel at his ease, by speaking in a mild and pleasant tone. He soon became so far master of himself, as to enter into conversation.

"I understood," said he, "that she has said very hard things against the priests. How can that be true?" "I can easily convince you," said I, "that they do what they ought not, and commit crimes of the kind I complain of. You are married, I suppose?" He assented. "You confessed, I presume, on the morning of your wedding-day?" He acknowledged that he did. "Then did not the priest tell you at confession, that he had had intercourse with your intended bride, but that it was for her sanctification, and that you must never reproach her with it?"

This question instantly excited him, but he did not hesitate a moment to answer it. "Yes," replied he, "and that looks black enough." I had put the question to him, because I knew the practice to which I alluded had prevailed at St. Denis while I was there, and believed it to be universal, or at least very common in all the Catholic parishes of Canada. I thought I had reason to presume that every Catholic, married in Canada, had had such experience, and that an allusion to the conduct of the priest, in this particular, must compel any of them to admit that my declarations were far from being incredible. This was the effect on the mind of the simple mechanic, and from that moment he made no more serious questions concerning my truth and sincerity during that interview.

Further conversation ensued, in the course of which I expressed the willingness which I have often declared, to go into the convent and point out things which would confirm, to any doubting person, the truth of my heaviest accusations against the priests and nuns. At length he withdrew, and afterwards entered, saying, that he had been to the convent to make inquiries concern-

ing me. He assured me that he had been told that, although I had once belonged to the nunnery, I was called St. Jacques, and not St. Eustace; and that now they would not own or recognize me. Then he began to curse me, but yet sat down, as if disposed for further conversation. It seemed as if he was affected by the most contrary feelings, and in rapid succession. One of the things he said, was to persuade me to leave Montreal. "I advise you," said he, "to go away to-morrow." I replied, that I was in no haste, and might stay a month longer.

Then he fell to cursing me once more; but the next moment broke out against the priests, calling them all the names he could think of. His passion became so high against them, that he soon began to rub himself, as the low Canadians, who are apt to be very passionate, sometimes do, to calm their feelings, when they are excited to a painful degree. After this explosion he again became quite tranquil, and turning to me, in a frank and friendly manner, said, "I will help you in your measures against the priests; but tell me, first—you are going to print a book, are you not?" "No," said I. "I have no thoughts of that."

Then he left the house again, and soon returned, saying he had been at the Seminary, and seen a person who had known me in the nunnery, and said I had been only a novice, and that he would not acknowledge me now. I sent back word by him, that I would show one spot in the nunnery that would prove I spoke the truth. Thus he continued to go and return several times, saying something of the kind every time, until I became tired of him. He was so much enraged once or twice during some of the interviews, that I felt somewhat alarmed; and some of the family heard him swearing as he went down stairs: "Ah, sacre—that is too black!"

He came at last, dressed up like a gentleman, and told me he was ready to wait on me to the nunnery. I

expressed my surprise that he should expect me to go with him alone, and told him I had never thought of going without some protector, still assuring him, that, with any person to secure my return, I would cheerfully go all over the nunnery, and show sufficient evidence of the truth of what I alleged.

My feelings continued to vary: I was sometimes fearful, and sometimes so courageous as to think seriously of going into the Recollet church during mass with my child in my arms, and calling upon the priest to own it. And this I am confident I should have done, but for the persuasions used to prevent me.

---

## CHAPTER IX.

## MY AFFIDAVIT.

**A**NOTHER person who expressed a desire to see me was an Irish milkman. He had heard, what had seemed to be pretty generally reported, that I blamed none but the Irish priests. He put the question, whether it was a fact that I accused nobody but Father Phelan. I told him it was not so, and this pleased him so well, that he told me, if I would stay in Montreal, I should have milk for myself and child as long as I lived. It is well known that strong antipathies have long existed between French and Irish Catholics in that city.

The next day the poor Irishman returned, but in a very different state of mind. He was present at church in the morning, he said, when Father Phelan told the congregation that the nun of whom he had spoken before, had gone to court and accused him; and that he, by the power he possessed, had struck her powerless as she stood before the judge, so that she sunk helpless on the floor. He expressed, by the motion of his hands, the unresisting manner in which she had sunk under the mysterious influence, and declared that she would have died on the spot, but that he had chosen to keep her alive that she might retract her false accusation. This, he said she did, most humbly, before the court, acknowledging that she had been paid a hundred pounds as a bribe.

The first words of the poor milkman, on revisiting me, therefore, were like these: "That's to show you

what power the priest has! Didn't he give it you in the court? It is to be hoped you will leave the city now." He then stated what he had heard Father Phelan say, and expressed his entire conviction of its truth, and the extreme joy he felt on discovering, as he supposed he had, that his own priest was innocent, and had gained such a triumph over me.

A talkative Irishwoman also made her appearance, among those who called at the house, and urged for permission to see me. She said, "I have heard dreadful things are told by a nun you have here, against the priests; and I have come to convince myself of the truth. I want to see the nun you have got in your house." When informed that I was unwell, and not inclined at present to see any more strangers, she still showed much disposition to obtain an interview. "Well, aint it too bad," she asked, "that there should be any reason for people to say such things against the priests?" At length she obtained admittance to the room where I was, entered with eagerness, and approached me.

"Arrah," she exclaimed, "God bless you—is this you? Now sit down, and let me see the child. And it is Father Phelan's, God bless you? But they say you tell about murders; and I want to know if they are all committed by the Irish priests." "Oh no," replied I, "by no means." "Then God bless you," said she. "If you will live in Montreal, you shall never want, I will see that neither you nor your child ever want for putting part of the blame upon the French priests. I am going to Father Phelan, and I shall tell him about it. But they say you are an evil spirit. I want to know whether it is so or not." "Come here," said I, "feel me, and satisfy yourself. Besides, did you ever hear of an evil spirit having a child?"

I heard from those about me that there was great difficulty in finding a magistrate willing to take my affidavit. I am perfectly satisfied that this was owing

to the influence of the priests to prevent my accusations against them from being made public. One evening, a lawyer who had been employed for the purpose, accompanied me to a French justice with an affidavit ready prepared in English for his signature, and informed him that he wished him to administer to me the oath. Without any apparent suspicion of me, the justice said, "Have you heard of the nun who ran away from the convent, and has come back to the city, to bear witness against the priests?" "No matter about that now," replied the lawyer hastily; "I have no time to talk with you — will you take this person's oath now or not?" He could not read a word of the document, because it was not in his own language, and soon placed his signature at the bottom. It proved, however, that we had gained nothing by this step, for the lawyer afterward informed us that the laws required the affidavit of a nun and a minor to be taken before a superior magistrate.

---

## CHAPTER X.

## INTERVIEWS.

THOSE who had advised to the course to be pursued, had agreed to lay the subject before the highest authorities. They soon came to the conviction that it would be in vain to look for any favour from the Governor, and resolved to lay it before the Attorney-General as soon as he should return from Quebec. After waiting for some time he returned; and I was informed in a few days that he had appointed an interview on the following morning. I went at the time with a gentleman of the city, to the house of Mr. Grant, a distinguished lawyer. In a short time a servant invited us to walk upstairs, and we went; but after I had entered a small room at the end of a parlour, the door was shut behind me by Mr. Ogden, the Attorney-General. A chair was given me, which was placed with the back towards a bookcase, at which a man was standing apparently looking at the books: and besides the two persons I have mentioned, there was but one more in the room, Mr. Grant, the master of the house. Of the first part of the interview I shall not particularly speak.

The two legal gentlemen at length began a mock examination of me, in which they seemed to me to be actuated more by a curiosity no way commendable, than a sincere desire to discover the truth, writing down a few of my answers. In this, however, the person behind me took no active part. One of the questions put to me was,—

"What are the colours of the carpet in the Superior's room?"

I told what they were, when they turned to him and inquired whether I had told the truth. He answered only by a short grunt of assent, as if afraid to speak, or even to utter a natural tone; and at the same time by his hastiness, showed that he was displeased that my answer was correct. I was asked to describe a particular man I had seen in the nunnery, and did so. My examiner turned partly round with some remark or question which was answered in a similar spirit. I turned and looked at the stranger, who was evidently skulking to avoid my seeing him, and yet listening to every word that was said. I saw enough in his appearance to become pretty well satisfied that I had seen him before; and something in his form or attitude reminded me strongly of the person whose name had been mentioned. I was then requested to repeat some of the prayers used in the Nunnery, and repeated part of the office of the Virgin, and some others.

At length, after I had been in the little room, as I could judge, nearly an hour, I was informed that the examination had been satisfactory, and that I might go.

I then returned home; but no further step was taken by the Attorney-General, and he refused, as I understood, to return my affidavit, which had been left in his hands to act upon.

Besides the persons I have mentioned, I had interviews with numbers of others. I learnt from some, that Father Phelan addressed his congregation a second time concerning me, and expressly forbade them to speak to me if they should have an opportunity, on pain of excommunication. It was also said, that he prayed for the family I lived with, that they might be converted.

I repeated to several different persons my willingness to go into the nunnery, and point out visible evidences of the truth of my statements; and when I was told by

one man, who said he had been to the priests, that I had better leave the city, or I would be clapped into prison, I made up my mind that I should like to be imprisoned a little while, because then, I thought I could not be refused a public examination.

Some Canadians were present one day, when the mistress of the house repeated, in my presence, that I was ready to go into the nunnery if protected, and, if I did not convince others of the truth of my assertions, that I would consent to be burned.

"O yes, I dare say," replied one of the men—"the devil would take her off,—she knows he would. He would take care of her—we should never be able to get her—the evil spirit."

A woman present said—

"I could light the fire to burn you, myself."

A woman of Montreal, who had a niece in the nunnery, on hearing of what I declared about it, said that if it was true she would help to tear it down.

Among those who came to see me, numbers were at first as violent as any I have mentioned, but after a little conversation, became mild and calm. I have heard persons declare that it would be no harm to kill me, as I had an evil spirit.

One woman told me, that she had seen Father Phelan in the street, talking with a man, to whom he said that the people were coming to tear down the house in which I stayed, intending afterwards to set fire to it in the cellar. This story gave me no serious alarm, for I thought I could see through it evidence of an intention to frighten me, and make me leave the city.

I was under great apprehensions, however, one day, in consequence of an accidental discovery of a plan laid to take me off by force. I had stepped into the cellar to get an ironholder, when I heard the voices of persons in the street above, and recognized those of my mother and the Irishwoman her friend. There was another woman with them.

"You go in and lay hold of her," said one voice.

"No, you are her mother—you go in and bring her out—we will help you."

I was almost overcome with dread of falling into their hands, believing that they would deliver me up to the Superior. Hastening into a room, I got behind a bed, told the lady of the house the cause of my fear, and calling to a little girl to bring me my child, I stood in the state of violent agitation. Expecting them in the house every instant, and fearing my infant might cry, and lead them to the place of my concealment, I put my hand upon its mouth to keep it quiet.

It was thought desirable to get the testimony of the mistress of the house where I spent the night, after my escape from the nunnery, as one means of substantiating my story. I had been there the day before my visit to the house of Mr. Grant, accompanied by a friend, and on my first inquiring of her about my nunnery dress, she said she had carried it to the Superior; speaking with haste, as if she apprehended I had some object very different from what I actually had. It now being thought best to summon her as a witness before a magistrate, and not knowing her whole name, we set off again towards her house to make inquiry.

On our way we had to pass behind the parade. I suddenly heard an outcry from a little gallery in the rear of a house which fronts another way, which drew my attention.

"There's the nun, there's the nun!" exclaimed a female, after twice clapping her hands smartly together, "There's the nun, there's the nun."

I looked up, and whom should I see but the Irish-woman, who had taken so active a part, on several occasions, in my affairs, on account of her friendship for my mother, the same who had accompanied me to Longueuil in a boat, when I set out for New York, after making arrangements for my journey. She now behaved as if exasperated against me to the utmost;

having, as I had no doubt, learnt the object of my journey to Montreal since I had last spoken with her, and having all her Catholic prejudices excited. She screamed out:

"There's the nun that's come to swear against our dear Father Phelan. Arrah, lay hold, lay hold upon her! Catch her, kill her, pull her to pieces."

And so saying she hurried down to the street, while a number of women, children, and some men, came running out, and pursued after me. I immediately took to flight, for I did not know what they might do; and she, with the rest, pursued us, until we reached two soldiers, whom we called upon to protect us. They showed a readiness to do so; and when they learnt that we were merely going to a house beyond, and intended to return peaceably, consented to accompany us. The crowd, might rather be called a mob, thought proper not to offer us any violence in the presence of the soldiers, and after following us a little distance, began to drop off, until all had disappeared. One of the soldiers, however, soon after remarked that he observed a man following us, whom he had seen in the crowd, and proposed that instead of both of them going before us, one should walk behind, to guard against any design he might have. This was done; and we proceeded to a house near the one where I had found a refuge, and after obtaining the information we sought, returned, still guarded by the soldiers.

All our labour in this case, however, proved unavailing; for we were unable to get the woman to appear in court.

At length it was found impossible to induce the magistrates to do anything in the case; and arrangements were made for my return to New York. While in the ferry-boat crossing from Montreal to Laprairie, I happened to be standing near two little girls, when I overheard the following conversation.

"Why do you leave Montreal so soon?"

"I had gone to spend a week or two; but I heard that Antichrist was in the city, and was afraid to be there. So I am going right home. I would not be in Montreal while Antichrist is there. He has come to destroy the Catholic religion."

I felt quite happy when I found myself once more safe in New York; and it has only been since my return from Montreal, and the conviction I had there formed, that it was in vain for me to attempt to get a fair investigation into the Hotel Dieu Nunnery, that I seriously thought of publishing a book.

---

## CHAPTER XI.

## RECOLLECTIONS.

SINCE the publication of my first edition, I have had different things brought to my memory, which I had forgotten while reviewing in it the past scenes of my life. Some of these have presented themselves to me while meditating alone, by day or by night; and others have been brought to mind by conversing with others. I have seen a number of my former acquaintances, and in my interviews with them, my memory has often been refreshed on one subject or another. During a conversation I had in March last, with Mr. John Hilliker of New York, who by so kindly persisting in taking me from my exposed retreat, saved my life as I believe, and introduced me to the Alms-house, he recalled to my mind a paper which I held in my hand when he found me in a field. I did not mention that paper in my Sequel, because I did not think of it. He mentions, in his affidavit, that I refused to let him see it, and tore it to pieces, when I found he was resolved to remove me. I had made up my mind that I was soon to die. Indeed, although I have felt unwilling to declare it heretofore, my intention had been to die by starvation, in the lonely place where I had taken my abode. Sometimes this resolution failed me for a time, and I would eat, and even send the little boy who visited me, to buy a few cakes. Sometimes, also, I thought of destroying my life by other means; but still thinking it would have some merit in the sight of God to disclose the worst of

the crimes I had witnessed in the Nunnery, I determined to leave behind me a record which might be picked up after my death, whenever and however that event might come upon me. I therefore one day sent Tommy to buy me some paper; and, understanding I wanted to write, he brought me an inkstand and pen, as I believe from his mother's house. I wrote a brief statement of facts upon the paper, and folded it, I believe, in the form of a letter, after signing it, as I think, with my Christian name only, "Maria." This was the paper which Mr. Hilliker endeavoured to obtain, and which I tore, to prevent it from being seen, when I thought death was not so near as I had supposed.

The Sunday before the birth of my child, I again wrote, with similar feelings, and in a similar style, and hid the paper. But I afterwards took it again and burnt it.

While I was in the Asylum, a gentleman who had Miss Reed's book, ("Six Months in a Convent,") read some passages in my presence, which irritated me so much that I spoke to him with passion, and I fear almost insulted him. I had never heard of such a person or such a book before, but I believed everything I heard, because it corresponded with my own experience, so far as it went; but I thought, at that moment, that it was wrong to make known such things to the world, as it was calculated to injure the Church: in such an unsettled state did my mind continue to be for a considerable time. It was perfectly evident to me, however, that the institution where she was, must be materially different from the Black Nunnery, as it was far from being so close, or governed by such strict rules. She also had been in it too short a time to learn all; and besides, being only a novice, it was impossible that she should be fully acquainted with many things which are communicated only to nuns.

While I was in the Asylum, I had once made up my

mind to confess to Mr. Conroy, after receiving his invitations and threatening messages, being strongly urged by some of the Catholic women about me. It happened, most fortunately for me, that I was befriended and advised by an excellent woman, Mrs. Neil, who took great pains to instruct and influence me aright. When I had decided on obeying the summons of the priest, Mrs. Neil came in, and having ascertained my intention, urged me to reflect, and impressed it upon my mind, that I was responsible to God, and not to man, for my conduct, and that his power and authority over me were only pretended. I believe I had then sometimes more confidence in priests than in God Almighty. She assured me that I had rights, and had friends there who would protect me. I then determined not to go to confession.

I have generally found it easier to convince Catholics than Protestants of the truth of my story, if they come to me with doubts or even unbelief. Since the first appearance of my book, I have received visits from a great number of persons in consequence of what they had seen or heard of its contents; and among these have been a considerable number of Catholics. While I am able to say that I have had the satisfaction of removing all doubts from the minds of some Protestants whom I have seen, I must confess that in general I have received the greatest satisfaction from interviews with intelligent Catholics. The reason of this is, that I know better how to treat the latter in argument. Having been one myself, I know where their difficulties lie, how to appeal to their own minds, and how to lead them to correct conclusions. Perhaps I can best convey my meaning to my readers, by giving a brief account of some of the interviews alluded to.

There is an interesting little girl whom I have repeatedly conversed with (the daughter of an ignorant Catholic woman), who had enjoyed some of the advantages of instruction in the scriptures, and submits with

extreme reluctance to the ceremonies which her mother requires her to perform, in compliance with the requisitions of her priest. She believes my book, and she has reason for it. She has acknowledged to me, though with shame and reluctance, that, when compelled by her mother to confess to Father \_\_\_\_\_, in his private room, he has sat with his arms around her, and often kissed her, refusing money for the usual fee, on the plea that he never requires pay for confessing pretty girls. He told her the Virgin Mary would leave her if she told of it. His questions are much the same as I have heard. All this I can believe, and do believe. I need not say that I tremble for her fate.

During the first week in March, 1836, I received a visit at my lodgings in New York, from a young woman, of a Protestant family in this city, who had received a Roman Catholic education. She called, as I understood, at the urgent request of her mother, who was exceedingly distressed at her daughter's intention to enter a Canadian nunnery.

Part of our interview was in private; for she requested me to retire with her a little time, where we might be alone; and I found her intention was, by certain queries, to satisfy herself whether I had ever been a Roman Catholic. She inquired if I could tell any of the questions commonly asked of women in the confession box; and on my answering in the affirmative, she desired me to repeat some, which I did. This satisfied her on that point; and I soon became so far acquainted with the state of her mind, as to perceive that she was prepared to avoid the influence of every argument that I could use against the system to which she had become attached.

She confessed to me, that she had given five hundred dollars to the Cathedral, and a considerable sum to St. Joseph's Church, and that she had decided on entering a nunnery in Canada. I inquired why she

did not enter one in the United States. To this she replied, that she had only one objection; her Confessor, Father Pies, having told her that he would by no means recommend the latter, and greatly preferred the former, because the priests had entire control over the Canadian nunneries, which they had not of those in the States. This, and some other parts of our conversation took place in the presence of other persons; and on hearing this declaration of the priest, the motive of which was to us so palpable, a lady present laughed outright.

While we were alone, on her expressing a doubt of the crimes I have charged upon the priests, I said, but you admit that they have said and done such things (which I do not like to repeat). She signified assent. Then, said I, how can you pretend that any thing is too bad for them to do? I also said, you admit that they have asked you in the Confession box, whether you ever wished to commit beastiality. She replied, "Yes; but if we have not evil thoughts, there is no harm." "You admit that they have treated you with great familiarity at confession?" She replied, that she confessed to her priest while he sat in a chair, and that he had; "but," said she, "you know a priest is a holy man, and cannot sin." And when I pressed her with another question, she confessed that her priest had told her she could not be sanctified without having performed an act commonly called criminal, and replied in a similar manner.

She was ashamed or afraid to assert her full faith in some of the doctrines she had been taught, when I loudly and emphatically demanded of her whether she did indeed credit them. This was the case with her in regard to the pardon of sins by priests, the existence of purgatory, or a middle place, &c. She spoke of these and other subjects as if she believed in them: but when I said, "Do you believe it really and truly?—you do?" she invariably faltered and denied it.

"She spoke of my "Disclosures" as untrue; and I

got it out of her that she had conversed with her priest about me at Confession, who assured her that I was not myself, not Maria Monk, but an evil spirit, in short, the devil in the form of a woman. After considerable conversation, she admitted that my book was undoubtedly true; but still she refused to do, as I told her she ought after saying what she had, come out and be a Protestant.

She informed me that her confessor had a great desire to see me, and inquired if I would consent to ~~an~~ interview. I replied, that I would readily agree to see him in the presence of Dr. Brownlee, but not alone; and she went away without leaving me any reason to hope that she had been released from the power of superstition, or had any intention of gratifying her mother, who was deeply distressed at the prospect of her daughter's ruin.

## CHAPTER XII.

## RECOLLECTIONS.

WHILE I was a novice, there was a young lady of our number from the Tannery, named Angelique Duranceau, with whom I was somewhat acquainted, and of whom I had a favourable opinion. She was about eighteen, and at the time of her entrance had every appearance of good health. After she had been there a considerable time, it might be about seven months, (as I know she was not near the period when she could make her general confession, that is, at the end of the first year,) I saw her under circumstances which made a strong impression on my mind.

I had received a summons from the Superior to attend in the Novices' sick-room, with several other novices. When I entered, I found Fathers Savage and Bonin reading a paper, and Miss Duranceau on a bed, with a look so peculiar as quite to shock me. Her complexion was dark, and of an unnatural colour, her look strange, and she occasionally started and conducted very singularly indeed, though she never spoke. Her whole appearance was such as to make me think she had lost her reason, and almost terrified me. The Superior informed us that she wanted us as witnesses; and the priests then coming forward, presented the paper to Miss Duranceau, and asked her if she was willing to give all her property to the church. She replied with a feeble motion of the head and body, and then, having a pen put into her hands, wrote her name to it without reading it, and relapsed into apparent

unconsciousness. We were then requested to add our signatures, which being done, we withdrew, as we entered, I believe, without the sick novice having had any knowledge of our presence, or of her own actions.

A few hours afterwards I was called to assist in laying out her corpse, which was the first intimation I had of her being dead. The Superior, myself, and one or two other novices, had the whole of this melancholy task to perform, being the only persons admitted into the apartment where the body lay. It was swelled very much. We placed it in a coffin, and screwed on the cover alone. On account of the rapid change taking place in the corpse, it was buried about twenty-four hours after death.

Not long after the burial, two brothers of Miss Duranceau came to the Convent, and were greatly distressed when told that she was dead. They complained of not being informed of her sickness; but the Superior assured them that it was at the urgent request of their sister, who was possessed of so much humility, that she thought herself unworthy of attracting the regard of any one, and not fit to be lamented even by her nearest friends. "What was she," she had said, according to the declarations made by the Superior, "what was she that she should cause pain to her family?"

This was not the only occasion on which I was present at the laying out of the dead. I assisted in three other cases. Two of the subjects died of consumption, or some similar disease; one of whom was an old country girl, and the other a squaw. The latter seemed to fall away from the time when she came into the nunnery, until she was reduced almost to a shadow. She left to the Convent a large amount of money.

Several stories were told us at different times, of nuns who had gone into a state of sanctity in the Convent. One, who had excited much attention and wonder by prophesying, was at length found to be in such a con-

dition, and was immediately released from the duty of observing the common rules of the Convent, as the Superior considered her authority over her as having in a manner ceased.

It was affirmed that many priests had been taken to heaven, body and soul, after death.

The following story I was told by some of the nuns and the Superior while I was a novice, and it made a considerable impression upon my mind.—After catechism one day, a dove appeared in the room while the nuns were kneeling and engaged in prayer. It addressed one of the nuns and the Superior, not only in an audible voice, but in a string of French rhymes, which were repeated to me so often that I learnt them almost all by heart, and retain several to this day.

“Un grand honneur je vous confere,  
“Aussi a vous, la Superieure.”

These were the first two lines. In the sequel the dove informed the audience that in eight days the spirit of the nun should be raised to heaven, to join its own, and that of other souls in that blessed place; and spoke of the honour thus to be conferred upon the nun, and on the Superior too, who had had the training of one to such a grade of holiness.

When the day thus designated arrived, a number of priests assembled, with the Superior, to witness her expected translation; and while they were all standing around her, she disappeared, her body and soul being taken off together to heaven. The windows had been previously fastened, yet these offered no obstacle, and she was seen rising upward like a column moving through the air. The sweetest music, as I was assured, accompanied her exit, and continued to sound the remainder of the day, with such charming and irresistible effect, that the usual occupations of the nuns were interrupted, and all joined in and sang in concert.

---

## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE SCOTCH NOVICE.

THERE was a young girl, named Ann, who was very stout and rather homely, but not of pleasing manners, though of a good disposition, seventeen or eighteen years of age, to whom I took a liking. She was a novice with me, and the time of which I am to speak, was not long after I returned from St. Denis. The Superior also displayed a partiality for her, and I found she was much in favour of having her received as a nun, if it could be accomplished. She was very handy at different kinds of work; and, what I believe chiefly induced me to regard her with kindness, she was a fatherless and motherless child. She had a beau in town, who one day called to see her at the nunnery, when she was going to confession.

I was with the Superior at the time, who, on being informed that the young man was there, and of his errand, requested me to go into the parlour with her, to meet him. He put into the Superior's hands a parcel and three letters, requesting her to give them to Ann. She took them, with an expression of assent, and he withdrew. Just as he had gone, Ann came hurrying into the parlour, saying that some one had told her that the Superior had sent for her. The Superior rebuked her sharply, and sent her back, without, however, showing her what she had promised to give her. Ann said, that she had understood a young man (mentioning her visitor) had called to see her. This the Superior denied, telling her never to come till she was wanted.

When Ann had gone, the Superior told me to go with her to her room, which I did. She there first made me promise never to tell of what she was going to do, and then produced the letters and package, and began to open them. One of the letters, I remember, was folded in a singular manner, and fastened with three seals. In the parcel was found a miniature of the young man, a pair of ear-rings, a breast pin, and something else, what, I have now forgotten. The letters were addressed to her by her lover, who advised her by all means to leave the Convent. He informed her that a cousin of hers, a tailor, had arrived from Scotland, who was in want of a housekeeper; and urged her to live with him, and never renounce the Protestant religion in which she had been brought up.

I was surprised that the Superior should do what I felt to be very wrong and despicable; but she represented it as perfectly justifiable on account of the good which she had in view.

I considered myself as bound to be particularly obedient to the Superior, in order that I might make my conduct correspond with the character given of me to her, by Miss Bousquier, who, as I have mentioned in the sequel of my first volume, had shown me an evidence of her friendship by recommending me to her, and becoming, in some sense, responsible for my good conduct to induce her to receive me back into the nunnery. This was a strong reason for my complying with the Superior's wish in the case of which I am speaking.

Since I have alluded here to the period of my return to the convent, I may remark that the Superior took some pains to ascertain, by her own inquiries, whether there was substantial reason for reliance on the favourable opinion expressed to her of me by Miss Bousquier. I recollect particularly her inquiring of me whom I had conversed with, while at St. Denis, to persuade them to enter the Black Nunnery; for Miss Bousquier, I under-

stood, had informed her that I had shown my attachment to the Hotel Dieu, by making favourable representations of it while with her engaged in keeping school. To the Superior's inquiries I replied, that I had urged little Gueroutte to become a nun. She was the daughter of Jean Richard, as he was familiarly called, to distinguish him from a number of other men of nearly the same name; for he had extensive family connections in that place. He lived opposite Miss Bousquier, so that I had frequent opportunities to converse with his daughter.

But not to detain my readers longer on this digression, I will return to my story and poor Ann, the Scotch girl. Having received particular instructions from the Superior, I promised to endeavour to get into her confidence, for the purpose of influencing her to take the veil, and to proceed in accordance with the directions given me. The Superior told me by no means to make any approaches to her at once, nor indeed for some time, lest she should suspect our design, but to wait awhile, until she could have no reason to think my movements might have grown out of the circumstances above mentioned: for Ann appeared to be uncommonly penetrating, as the Superior remarked; and of course much caution was necessary in dealing with her. Some time subsequently, therefore, I cannot tell exactly how long, I engaged in conversation with her one day, in the course of which she remarked that Miss Farns, a confidential friend of hers, who had spent a short time in the nunnery some time before, was soon coming back.

This Miss Farns had come in on trial, while I was in the Convent, and I had often heard the Superior say that she must be separated from Ann, because they were so much together, and so often breaking the rules. Ann now told me, in confidence, that her friend was coming back, not with any real intention of staying, but only for the purpose of giving her some

information favourable to herself, which she had obtained. This she wished to become fully possessed of before she would decide whether to leave the Convent or not.

All this I communicated to the Superior, who then began to look for Miss Farns' return, with a determination to treat her with every appearance of kindness. She often, in the meantime, gave me little delicacies, with directions to share them with Ann. Miss Farns soon presented herself for re-admission, and was admitted without any difficulty, not being required even to change her dress. This occurred, as nearly as I can recollect, about six weeks after the affair of intercepting Ann's letters, mentioned a few pages back, and somewhere about the close of summer, or the beginning of autumn.

Being allowed to do pretty much as they chose, Ann and her friend were much together, and generally engaged in deep conversation: so that, as the Superior declared, it was evident they were forming some plan for secret operations. I tried several times to get near and overhear what they were talking about: but I could not learn anything. The next day Miss Farns departed, saying she never intended to return; which offended the Superior so much, that she said she would have the doors shut if she ever came again.

The same evening Ann requested me to tell the Superior that she wished to get her clothes, that she might leave the Convent. I went to the Superior's room, where I found Father Bonin sitting on the sofa talking with her. When they were informed of Ann's message, the Superior said she would let the girl go at once back to the world, and be given up to the devil. Bonin argued a good deal against this. The Superior replied, that she had set the old nuns at work, but without success; they had not been able to influence Ann as she desired; and it was a shame to keep such a creature within holy walls, to make the flock discontented.

At length she decided on the course to pursue; and turning to me, said: take her upstairs, give her her clothes, yet argue with her in favour of remaining in the Convent, but at the same time tell her that I am indifferent about it, and care not whether she goes or stays.

I accordingly returned to Ann, and telling her that she might follow me upstairs and get her clothes, led the way, and delivered them to her. In obedience to my orders, I lost no time in representing her intentions to depart from our holy residence as an insinuation of the devil; and told her that he was trying his best to draw her out into the world, that he might secure her for himself. I told her that he had a strong hold upon her, and she ought to use the greater exertions to resist his temptations; that the Superior thought it might be better on the whole if she departed, because her influence might be very injurious to others if she remained; yet I felt a deep interest in her, and could not bear to have her perform her intention, because I well knew that her throwing off the holy dress that she then wore, to take her former one, would be the first step towards damnation.

"You need not talk so to me," replied Ann, "you have done the same yourself." I told her that if I had, I had lived to regret it, and was glad to get back to the Convent again. After awhile an old nun came up, called me aside, and said that the Superior wished me to continue talking to Ann; and, in case I should prevail with her to remain, to make her go down and beg pardon for the scandal she had caused by her conduct, and ask to be taken back again into the flock of the good shepherd, as the Superior was often called.

Poor Ann at length began to listen to me; and I got her to repeat to me all that Miss Farns had said to her during her late short visit to the nunnery. The amount of it was, that if Ann would come out at dusk, and go to a particular house she would find her relations waiting

for her, who had arrived from Scotland—they were, if I mistake not, her brother and cousin. Having prevailed upon her to break her engagement to meet them, I soon persuaded her to go down stairs as a penitent, and there she humbly kneeled, and in the usual manner kissed the feet of the Superior, and all the novices, and begged and obtained a penance, which was to serve as an atonement for her offence. This was to fast three mornings, ask forgiveness of all her companions on the same days and perform acts of contrition.

That evening the Superior called me to tea in her own room, when I told her all that I had learnt from the confession of Ann, who I knew was fasting at the time. When the Superior understood the plan proposed by Miss Farns, she spoke of her in very severe terms, and then commended me, saying that I ought to rejoice at having saved a soul from hell, but ought to guard against pride, as I had accomplished what I had undertaken only by the help of the Virgin Mary.

Ann continued to behave as she had promised, and we heard nothing more of any attempt by her friends to get her out of the Nunnery. Not long after, however, she was taken sick, and I ascertained from observation and inquiry, that the cause of it was her discontentment, as she complained of loneliness. I felt compassion for her, and told the Superior that I thought she ought to be treated with more leniency. She said she would get some of the old nuns to talk with her a little more.

Ann was received, in due time, as a nun. I was not present at the ceremony, but I afterwards met with her, and several times had a little conversation with her.

---

## CHAPTER XIV.

## MISS ROSS.

HERE was a girl whom I knew from a child, a Miss Ross, the recollection of whom gives me deep pain: for I know too well that I have been the cause of great misfortunes to her. I remember being with her at different times in my early days. After our family removed to Montreal, and had our residence in the Government House, we often had calls from persons of our acquaintance, as many were fond of walking in the garden, or green, as we commonly called it.

Such of my readers as have visited that city will be likely to remember the place of our residence; for the Government House, of which my mother is still the keeper, is of very large size (I have sometimes heard it spoken of as the most ancient in America). It was said that the foundation stones of that and the old French church were laid on the same day, as recorded. The gateway is of stone, and it is furnished in a manner becoming the residence of the Governor of the Province. The garden and green are of great extent, and present fine walks and flowers; and as the former overlooks the esplanade, to which it is adjoining, it was a favourite resort on Sunday afternoons, when the troops are on parade.

Miss Ross, I recollect, one evening in particular, paid me a visit with a Miss Robinson; and we amused ourselves together in the green. Her mother lived a little out of the city, near the Lachine road. She was

a Scotch lady, and possessed a large property. When Miss Ross grew up, she became attached to a young man of my acquaintance, and indeed a relation of my mother; but when it became known, she found her mother very much opposed to her wishes.

While I was a novice in the Hotel Dieu, Miss Ross came in as one; and we had frequent interviews together, as our acquaintance still continued, and indeed we had always been friends. She became informed of my design of taking the black veil—I presume I must have told her of it myself; and one day she told me, that she had sometimes thought of becoming a nun, but still felt but little inclination that way; yet she requested me to do her the favour to inform her how I was pleased with that mode of life, after I should have been in long enough to form an opinion. If I thought she would be happy as a nun, she desired I would frankly inform her; and if not—as I was acquainted with her disposition—that I would warn her against it. We often conversed on the subject afterwards: and it was repeated, and plainly understood between us, that I was to tell her the exact truth, as she would probably be guided by my opinion in the course she would adopt.

I went through many preparatory steps before my admission, as I have mentioned in my first volume, took the veil, and passed through some of the scenes which I have before spoken of, before I ever particularly reverted to the request of Miss Ross, so far as I now can remember. One thing, however, I here stop to mention, which I omitted to say in my first volume, and which I might forget hereafter, viz.: that soon after my admission as a "Received," the Superior gave me charge of her room, that of the old nuns, and the adjoining community-room; and thus kept me for about three months in a degree more separate from the other nuns than I should otherwise have been. This brought me more into intercourse with the Superior, and in the same proportion made some other nuns regard me with

jealousy: for some of them occasionally, in some way or other, would express dislike towards me. Perhaps this state of things the more disposed me to confide in the Superior.

After I had been a nun for some weeks, I cannot tell exactly how long, I recollect that as I lay awake one night, I began to think of Miss Ross, and to recall the conversations we had held together in the novices' apartment. All at once it occurred to me that I might probably do a great benefit to myself, an honour to the nunnery and to true religion, as well as save her, by inducing her to take the black veil, especially as she had so much property to add to the funds. At the same time the thought presented itself to my mind, that by so doing I should gain a very exalted place in heaven for myself: for I had already heard a great deal said, and had repeatedly read the same in our books, that to bring a person into a Convent, was one of the highest kinds of merit. I soon made up my mind to communicate to the Superior all I knew; for although I questioned at once whether it would not be shameful and sinful to betray the confidence of my friend, this was easily got over, by the thought of the vast benefits to result from it, especially to herself.

The next day I told one of the old nuns that I wished to speak to the Superior; for as this was commonly required, and nuns could not go into her room without leave, I conformed to custom. I was soon admitted, when I told her all Miss Ross had said to me, and added, that I wished to get her to take the veil. I apologized for my private conversations. She said they were perfectly justifiable. I think I never saw the Superior express more satisfaction than she did on the receipt of this intelligence. She appeared overjoyed; listened to all I had to say with great attention, and highly approved of my proposition. When I informed her of Miss Ross's attachment to young —, she replied that that might explain the state of be-

mind; for the old nuns had for some time spoken of her depressed appearance, and she had mentioned at confession that something lay very heavy on her mind.

The Superior appeared from that moment to devote her whole attention to the consideration of the subject. She seemed for a time almost lost in thought; and remarked to me, "We must consider this matter; we must consider the best way to bring her into the nunnery: for some persons are harder to get out of the devil's power than others. After a little time she told me I should be sent to read the lecture to the novices, and she would tell the old nuns to allow me to converse with Miss Ross, which they would not let me do, as I well knew, without her express orders, as it was contrary to the rules. She then told me many things to say to Miss Ross, and some of her instructions she repeated to me, so that I might not be at a loss when I should converse with her, no matter what objections she might raise.

Among other things which I most distinctly recollect, she told me to assure her, that as to the happiness of a Convent, no person could possibly be more happy than nuns; for there we were assured of the favour of God, and of heavenly enjoyments after death; that while in the world, other young women would draw us off from our duty, and occupy our minds with thoughts that would do us harm: that we were exposed to no such dangers. The sinfulness of vain thoughts might appear to us very trifling, but it was very different in the sight of God; and how could we hope to resist the temptations surrounding us in such a manner in the world? If she made any allusion to her attachment to the young man before mentioned, the Superior told me to declaim against it, as an abomination to think of such a thing in the nunnery; that I could not converse with her if she spoke of it again, as not a proper person. If she appeared to hesitate at my proposition, I was to tell her solemnly that my offer was a direct invitation from

Jesus Christ to become his spouse, which could not be rejected without great guilt.

The Superior told me that I should be richly rewarded if I succeeded. She thought I would soon be made an old (or confidential) nun: and she would give me a most precious relic, with a piece of the heart of Mary Magdalen, and intercede for me with the Virgin.

After I had listened attentively to all these instructions, received from a woman to whom I looked with unbounded respect and veneration, I left her, prepared to put them in practice to the best of my ability, much excited with the hope of accomplishing what I thought a truly great and meritorious act, and one that would ensure the salvation of my friend.

The reader may perhaps recall the disclosures I have heretofore made, of the crimes I had witnessed, and the sufferings I had undergone before this period of my convent life, and wonder how I could possibly have been so far deluded as really to believe what I was thus prepared to say. Such, however, is indeed the truth; except that I must allow that my conscience repeatedly disturbed me, and seriously, too, with the suggestion that I should be guilty of direct deception, if I said either that I was happy in the Convent, or that I had at all times unshaken faith in any of the declarations I was about to make. More than once, too, I was shocked at the idea of deceiving my confiding young friend. But as I believed what I had been so often taught, about the virtue of deception, in certain circumstances, I did my best to smother my scruples.

The promised arrangements were made by the Superior; the old nuns were instructed not to interrupt any conversation they might witness between Miss Ross and myself, and I was directed, at the appointed hour, to read the lecture. I thus easily found the opportunity I sought, and was soon with Miss Ross, while the old nuns appeared very busy in another part

of the room, and unobserving. Though under a repeated promise to reveal to her the state of my mind, now that I had been long familiar with the secrets of the nunnery, I most cautiously guarded myself, and assumed what did not belong to me—the appearance of one devotedly fond of the institution.

I told her that I had now been long enough a "Received" to be able to express an opinion ; and I must inform her that we lived a most happy life within the institution ; that I would urge her, as a friend, to take the veil, and withdraw from that world which was so full of temptations. To this she lent a very serious ear ; and I saw that my words produced a solemn and saddening effect upon her feelings. She replied that she felt quite undecided what to do. She seemed solicitous to be still farther assured of the happiness I had spoken of as enjoyed by the nuns.

When she touched that subject, I addressed her exactly after the manner directed by the Superior, and speaking rather harshly, inquired of her, " Do you condemn the life of a nun, then ? " She instantly answered, " No ; " and she easily admitted all I said about the attention paid to the comfort of those in the Convent. " But, " said she, " my mother is very much opposed to my taking the veil ; she is a widow, and you know we are bound to honour and obey our parents—nature teaches us that." The Superior had furnished me, in French, with an answer to this objection ; and as we were accustomed to converse in English, I had only to translate her words, which were,

" Les droits de nos parens ne sont pas devant les droits de notre religion."

" The claims of our parents are not before those of our religion."

" I shan't be a nun ! " said she, with determination. I talked with her, however, some time, and she began again to listen patiently.

I then added that Christ had commanded us to

"forsake father and mother" to be his disciples, ~~and~~ that we must have trials and tribulations before we could enter the kingdom of heaven. She told me that she felt then less inclined to the world than she had when we had last conversed together; but at length she alluded to Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. "Never mention," I exclaimed, "such abominations! It is sin, it is defilement to speak of such a thing in so holy a place as a convent." This I said very much in the manner and tone which the Superior had used in dictating it to me. I then puts in the way of your salvation—and see how he tries added, "Now this is the only obstacle which the devil more to prevent you, the nearer you are getting to it. All that you have to do, then, is to resist the more."

And the repetition of these expressions has brought to my mind many others which I often heard, not only about that time, but frequently before and afterwards. One brings up another; and to speak of objections that might be made to any of our nunnery doctrines, or to hear a question asked about our way of life, naturally calls to my memory the replies which were made to them.

"Are you at liberty to buy a farm, and sell it when you please? No.—Then how can you give yourself to a young man when you please?"

"Must we not obey our parents?—Quand les droits de la religion sont concerne, les droits de la nature cessent."

[("When the rights or claims of religion are concerned, the rights (or claims) of nature cease.")]

When the question is put to an old nun—"What made you become a nun?" the regular, fixed answer always is, with a peculiar drawl—"Divine love." But such things as these, although they come up very strongly to my mind, may perhaps appear to be not worth mentioning.

The conversation I held with poor Miss Ross was much longer than I can undertake to give a full account

of; but after I had over and over again painted the happiness of a nun's life in the brightest manner I was able, and assured her that I had never known blessedness before I had entered upon it, I told her that I had had some inspiration from heaven, such as I had never enjoyed before, and that she would have the same. I also told her with solemnity, that she had now received, through me, an invitation from Jesus Christ, to become his bride; and that if she rejected it, it would be a sin of deep ingratitude, and he would reject her from the kingdom of heaven: that it was her duty to enter the Convent as a veiled nun, without regarding the feelings of her mother, or any other obstacle; and that she was bound to obtain all the property she could, and put it into the treasury of the institution.

---

## CHAPTER XV.

PLAN TO GET MISS ROSS INTO THE  
NUNNERY.

IT was very easy for me to see that what I said had a great effect on Miss Ross. I found it impossible, however, to make her promise me to take the veil. She persisted that she must see her mother first. I then left her, and went to the Superior's room, where I informed her of all that had passed. She appeared very much delighted, and treated me with great condescension and kindness. She said, however, that we should yet have to do much; for it was plain to her that the novice had very strong scruples to overcome—and she added, that the devil's influence was very powerful over some persons. We must, therefore, pursue a plan which would require great caution and skill on our part, but which, she had no doubt, would prove successful. This she communicated to me in a few words. That evening the Superior told the nuns that she had been warned in a dream that some one was in great temptation, and desired them to say a Pater and an Ave for her.

We were to disguise ourselves, and appear to Miss Ross, I as Satan, and she as the Holy Mother. Miss Ross must be brought alone, and with solemnity, to some place where we could carry through the deception without interruption, and with the best effect. The whole of her plan she communicated to me; but as we had several rehearsals to go through in preparation, instead of repeating her instructions, I had better relate what was done in conformity with them.

When we were prepared to go through with our

parts, in order that we might become familiar with them, she gave me an old robe, which she made me wrap around me, and the devil's cap, head, and horns, which is kept to scare the nuns, few of whom know of it. Thus I was concealed, everything except my eyes, and then approached a spot where we imagined the novice to be lying. I addressed her in a feigned voice, and invited her to become my servant, promising her a happy and easy life. In an instant, at a moment when we supposed her to be making a sign of the cross, I stopped speaking, and hastily withdrew. After a short time I returned, and made other propositions to her: and then, after flying again from the cross, again came back, and promised her, in case she would comply, to ensure her marriage with the man she loved. I then retired once more; after which, the Superior approached, and with as sweet and winning a voice as she could assume, said that she had listened to what had passed, and had come to assure her of her protection.

After I had become familiar with my part in this sad farce, and acted it to the satisfaction of the Superior, she took measures to have it performed for the last time. In this also I had a principal part to perform: for I was directed to hold another conversation with my deceived friend; and, in obedience to instructions, on Saturday evening took her into the Examination of Conscience room, and informed her that I had been inspired by the Virgin Mary to tell her, that if she would go into the nuns' private chapel, the Holy Mother would speak with her. I informed her, however, that it would not be at all surprising if the devil should appear to her, and endeavour to prevent her from holding so happy an interview; and that if she should be tempted, she must cross herself, and Satan would instantly leave her, because he could not withstand the power of the sign. Then telling her that she must keep a strict fast on Sunday evening, I informed her that on Monday morning I would be with her again.

In the meantime, the Superior, with the help of one of the old suns, Saint Margarite, and myself, had darkened the private chapel as much as we could, by means of black curtains, and placed only a single light in it, and that a taper, burning by the side of the altar. We also took down the cross, and laid it on the floor, with the head turned towards the door, and the foot towards the altar. When all was prepared, I went to Miss Ross, and conducted her into the chapel. I told her to lie down upon the cross, with her arms extended, in the attitude of the crucified Saviour, which she did; and then bound her eyes tight with a bandage, all just as the Superior had ordered, telling her she might otherwise see a horrid sight. I then retired by the door, just outside of which the Superior was standing; and there I was covered with the old robe; for although it was so dark, the eyes of the poor girl were blinded, and her head purposely so place that she could hardly have seen us under any circumstances, yet, the Superior said, perhaps she might peep a little and see us. If this plan failed, she said, she must resort to some other.

We were both completely disguised; and I had not only the dress on, and devil's cap, but a slice cut from a potato, and slit in different ways so as to resemble great teeth, which was crowded into my mouth. The front part of my cap had been turned up inside, and I painted my cheeks with some red paint the Superior gave me, and she afterwards put on more paint, thinking I had not enough.

After I had left Miss Ross in the chapel about a quarter of an hour, the Superior signified that it was time to return, and begin my temptation. I, therefore, approached her, and standing a little distance from her head, repeated some of the words I had been taught, and the circumstances are still most distinctly before me, so that I remember the words as if I had uttered them only yesterday. Perhaps one reason of it is, that every few minutes during the whole time, my con-

science stung me severely, so that I could scarcely go on with my part.

"Are you a fool," said I, "to be lying there in such a posture, for that God of yours? Had you not better serve me?" She raised her hand, without speaking, and made the sign of the cross, saying, "Jesu, Maria, Joseph, ayez pitie de moi." (Jesus, Mary, Joseph, have pity on me!)

I waited no longer, but immediately retired softly, as if I had vanished. After standing a few minutes beside the Superior, just outside of the door, without either of us speaking, she touched me, and I approached the poor novice again.

"Would you not like to come out of this place," I asked her, "and serve me? You shall have nothing but balls and pleasure of all kinds."

Miss Ross made the sign of the cross again, and I vanished as quickly and silently as before. In a short time I entered again, and told her, "if you will only leave this nunnery, I will do anything for you you wish—I will get you married to the young man you love so much."

Still the poor unsuspecting girl, though doubtless terrified, made the sign of the cross again and again; and at length I left her saying "Jesu, Maria, Joseph, ayez pitie de moi." I then took off my dress, when the Superior made me sit down, and signified that I must not make the slightest noise. She remarked,—

"Well, if this plan does not succeed, I will try force."

She then went in and addressed her, in French, in this manner:

"I am your Holy Mother (which means the Virgin Mary). I have been listening to your faithfulness, and will adopt you as one of my children. Are you willing to become one of my daughters? If you are, you must join the sisters this week and make your vows before another Sabbath passes over your head; for I am afraid the devil is making great plans to get you. But

if you have your vows made, I think you will be safe."

She then asked her if she was willing to give up all she had to the Holy Church, and told her, that unless she would part with all, she could not accept her. She then promised her her protection, if she was willing, and retired saying, "Peace be with you."

In the afternoon I was sent to request her to go into the Superior's room, as she wished to speak with her. On entering it, we found the Superior of the Convent and the Superior of the Seminary both there. The former addressed her, telling her that she had had a vision, in which she was told that the young novice who was doing penance in the chapel, was acceptable in the sight of God. At this Miss Ross appeared quite overjoyed, but scarcely able to speak.

The Superior then told her, that she ought to listen to any advice I might give her, for she had entire confidence in me, and she ought to be guided by my counsel. She requested her to return to the novices' department, retire into a corner, and determine what she would do. She then whispered to me, and desired me to remain with her until the Superior of the Seminary went away, which I did. She then told me to go to Miss Ross again, and coax her to be received almost immediately.

I went accordingly, and endeavoured to get a promise from her to that effect, but I was unable. She persisted that she must see her mother before she could take the veil. I inquired of her the reason. She replied that she wished to give to the nunnery all the property her mother could spare her. This I communicated to the Superior, who told me to say that her mother should be sent for the next day. Her mother came, and had an interview with her, in which she learnt her daughter's intention to become a nun. This was opposed to her utmost; but all the arguments and entreaties she used, were utterly vain—she could make no impression. Her

daughter had wished to see her only to tell her that such was her resolution, and to request her to deliver her that afternoon, all the money she intended ever to give her.

The widow retired—the money was sent—Miss Ross took the veil on the Wednesday morning following, and brought a large contribution. I was not present at her reception; and I do not think it necessary to say anything further on the subject, which is, and ever must be, all my life, one of the most painful with which I have had any connection. I will only add, that although I often saw Saint Mary (as she was called, after her supposed patroness), I never spoke with her after her reception. Opportunities, it is true, were not very frequent; but, when they were offered, she repeatedly seemed disposed to speak to me. I saw at length that she was becoming a favourite with Jane Ray, which pleased me, knowing that she would be of some service to her, and befriend her. Many a time she would fix her eyes upon me, and it seemed as if they would pierce through my soul.

---

## CHAPTER XVI.

## JANE RAY AGAIN.

ONE of the nuns was from St. Mark's, and bore the name of St. Mark. Her father visited the Superior one day, and requested her to have nuns pray for him daily for a short time, leaving with her a considerable sum of money to pay for their intercession. Such things were occasionally done by different persons. He also sent about forty dollars to his daughter, with a desire that they might be distributed among the nuns, to purchase whatever they might wish for. The Superior informed us that it was quite inconsistent with the rules of the nuns to receive such presents, but that, considering the devout character of the giver, she would not entirely forbid the execution of his request.

She therefore furnished us with some molasses to make into candy, and allowed us an unusual degree of liberty during a part of a day. A considerable quantity of molasses was made into candy by some of the most skilled in the process; though by no means as much as forty dollars' worth. The Superior, however, had a trick played on her in consequence of the indulgence: for some of us attributed it to a desire of pleasing the rich contributor, and not to any kindness towards ourselves.

When the time for evening prayers had almost arrived, Jane Ray proposed to drop a little warm candy in the chairs of the Superior and two old nuns. This was soon done; and in a few minutes those seats, as well as the others in the community room, were occu-

pied, and the prayers going on. At the close the Superior attempted to rise, but fell back again into her chair; and at the same moment the two old nuns did the same. After a few unsuccessful attempts, their situation became evident to all the assembly; and there was a great embarrassment at once among us all, arising from a disposition to speak and to laugh, opposed by the endeavour to suppress both. The scene was a very ludicrous one, and Jane enjoyed much amusement before the Superior and the old nuns could be ~~set~~ at liberty.

Jane Ray would sometimes seem to be overcome and lose courage, when detected and exposed for some of her tricks, even though not condemned to any severe penance. I have seen her cry, and even roar, after committing some breach of rules; and then retire to a corner, and after composing herself, begin to meditate a new trick. This she would commonly carry into effect with success; and then laughing aloud, declare that she was satisfied and happy again.

Sometimes she would submit to penances with perfect indifference, though they made her the constant object of observation. To punish her for her habitual negligence in dress, she was once ordered to wear an old nightcap until it fell to pieces; but still she was seen again as usual, with her apron half on and half off, and with stockings of different colours.

She would occasionally slip into the Superior's room, steal pass tickets, and get into the hospital with them; and this she did so boldly, that she was the occasion of the tickets being disused. Sometimes she would bring a Roman Catholic newspaper out of the Superior's room, and give it to the nuns to read; and sometimes repeat to us what she had overheard said in private.

Sometimes scenes of great agitation would occur, and things would be carried to such a state that one and another of the nuns would become desperate, and

resist with violence. For it is to be remembered that unspeakable practices were sometimes resorted to, at the will of the priests or bishops, countenanced by the Superior; and sometimes, as I have stated in my first volume, required on the authority of the Pope.

Jane Ray sometimes appeared as a loud and violent opposer of what were considered the established rules of the Convent. She would break out in denunciations of the priests, and berate them in a style which it would be difficult to imitate, if it were worth while. Other nuns would sometimes exclaim, "Are you not ashamed to show so little respect for the holy fathers?" "Why are they not ashamed?" she would reply, "to show no respect for the holy sisters?"

Some of the best opportunities I ever had for conversing with Jane, were at night; for during a considerable time she had her bed opposite mine, and by watching for a moment, when she could do it without being seen by the night watch, she would slip over to me, and get into my bed. Thus we have often spent hours together, and she found such occasions very convenient for communicating to me such plans as she devised for amusement or revenge. I sometimes lent an ear to her proposals, quite against my will; for I commonly concluded with a solemn confession of the wickedness, as I supposed it, in which she thus induced, and sometimes almost compelled me to engage. Indeed, it often happened that I had nothing to do in the morning, as it were, but to beg pardon; and when I was asked why I had so much of that business to do, I commonly laid it to Jane Ray. She, however, appeared to take much pleasure in the stolen interviews we thus had; and when we were obliged to lie at a distance from each other, she told me that it caused her to weep more than she had ever done in her life.

I naturally felt much curiosity to learn something of the history of Jane Ray, and repeatedly asked her

questions intended to lead her to tell me something of her family, her former residence, or life. But, although so communicative on most other subjects, on this she evidently did not like to speak. Repeatedly have I known her to waive my inquiries, and many times, also, when I spoke very plainly, she would become silent, and refuse to speak a word. All this unwillingness only served to increase my desire to know the truth, but I ever was able to draw from her anything more than a very brief and general account of herself; for never, except on a single occasion, did she comply with my wishes so far as even to speak on the subject.

One night, when she had secretly left her bed and entered mine, she happened to be in a very communicative mood, though she appeared more depressed and deeply sunk in melancholy than I had ever known her before. She then informed me that she had become attached to an officer of the British army in Quebec, in whom she confided to her ruin, believing that he intended to marry her. She left her parents, and after a time proceeded with him to Montreal. There he invited her to visit the Hotel Dieu Nunnery, as a curiosity; but to her surprise, she suddenly found herself deserted by him, and the doors closed upon her. From what she observed or heard, she soon learnt that this was done in consequence of an arrangement made between the officer and the Superiors of the Seminary and Convent, the first having paid a large sum of money to have her shut up from the world.

I understood her to say that the officer was an aide-de-camp of the former governor of Canada, Sir Peregrine Maitland. The priests, she believed, knew her story, but few of the nuns, she thought, had any knowledge of it except myself.

---

## CHAPTER XVII.

## FEAR OF THE PRIESTS.

I WAS kept in great fear of the priests, by pretences they made to various kinds of power. I was once confessing to Father Bedar, who is now dead, and told him I had something on my conscience which I did not like to communicate. He said to me, "I have power to strike you dead this minute, but I will not. I will spare you. Go and examine your conscience, and see if you cannot come back and tell me what it is that you now conceal."

I was much frightened; for I believed what he said, and supposed he could have taken away my life on the spot by only wishing it. I therefore immediately went to the examination of my conscience with fear and trembling.

I have remarked in my first volume, more than once, that we were told it was a duty to submit to the licentious wishes of the priests. This we were urged to on various considerations. We were told, for instance, that being consecrated to God, we were not our own, and even our persons were not to be regarded as at our disposal. Out of considerations of gratitude, too, we were told, it was our duty to suppress the doubts and misgivings which would sometimes arise in our minds, when we allowed our consciences to present the nature of our life in its own proper light. If there were no priests, we were reminded we could never get to heaven; and it would be ungrateful in the extreme, after being insured of eternal life by their kind offices, if we should deny them any wish whatever.

In spite, however, of all that was said, our feelings often revolted, and arguments were renewed. Not only so, but now and then, as I have before remarked, penances of different kinds were often resorted to, to suppress them.

One of the tales told us by the priests, was this—intended to prove the power they exercise by means of sacraments which none but they can administer. I recollect that it was recounted to us one day at catechism, by one of the fathers.

“I was once travelling,” said he, “in a desolate region, when I saw something flying like a white dove. Believing it to be the Holy Spirit, I followed it, and it led me to a house, over the door of which it stopped. I went in, and found an old man on his death-bed, who had never been baptized, nor ever heard of any religion. I baptized him; and he went off straight to heaven.”

One reason why I did not like to approach the cells occupied by the imprisoned nuns, was this: the Superior had told me that they were possessed by evil spirits, and that I must always make the sign of the cross on going into the cellar.

There are seven sins, as we were taught, which priests cannot forgive, viz.: that of refusing to pay tithes to the church, injuring dumb animals, setting a house on fire, hearing a Protestant preach, reading Protestant books, and one more which I do not remember. These however, can be forgiven by the Bishop or the Grand Vicar.

From what I heard and observed at different times, I had reason to believe that a serious misunderstanding existed between the Bishop and Father Richards. I heard it hinted, in some way, that the former would probably have had his residence in the nunnery but for the latter. But this I state only as what I have been told.

The term “old nun,” I did not particularly explain in my first edition. It did not refer entirely to age.

None of the nuns, indeed, were old women. For some reason or other, none of them appeared to me to be above forty years of age and few more than thirty. I never knew what made the difference between them and the common veiled nuns, like myself. It was easy to see that they stood on a different footing from the rest of us, but what that footing was I never could thoroughly understand. They had a separate sleeping room, which I have described, and exercised much authority, not merely in overseeing and directing operations in the nuns' and novices' departments, but were allowed to inflict various punishments without consulting the Superior, and sometimes did punish with great severity.

I sometimes imagined that there might be some formal introduction to the dignity and authority of an Old Nun, and that a higher grade existed, above that of the "Received." It has occurred to me as quite possible, (from what I knew of the difference between novices and veiled nuns,) that "Old Nuns" might have taken some peculiar oaths, and submitted to rules of a special nature. All this, however, I inferred only from their conduct, and the concert and understanding which they appeared to have with each other and the Superior. No further light could I obtain on the subject; and I am still as much in the dark as ever, although the Superior once gave me much encouragement to hope that I should become an "Old Nun."

Some of that class, as I began to say, were far from being old; and indeed a number of them were below thirty years of age, according to my judgment. As for their real names, families, or personal history, I knew as little of them as others. We called them, familiarly, Ma Mere (my mother) or Ma Tante (my aunt), and commonly obeyed them without delay when they laid their commands upon us.

I have no doubt that, whatever was the process by which "Old Nuns" are made, the reason of the eleva-

tion of a "Received" to that dignity, is her superior cunning. It was in consequence of my success at imposture, that the Superior told me she hoped I might become one; and the old nuns whom I best knew, were among the greatest adepts at duplicity I ever saw.

---

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## DISPUTES ABOUT MONEY.

A MONG the practices in the nunnery, is that of shaving the hair of the nuns on their admission — This is done to most, but not all; as the hair of some is more easily disposed in a manner thought necessary to the proper arrangement of the headband and veil. My hair was shaved on my reception, and frequently afterwards. At the time of my escape from the convent, it was very short; since when it has been growing, and it is now about six inches long. We used sometimes to shave each other's heads, and I have done it for other nuns.

It is a rule, that no novice shall be received who is not in sound health. Miss Louisa Bousquier, of St. Denis, owed her escape from the life of a nun to an affection of the head, on account of which she was discharged from her novitiate when within about three months of the period when she would have taken the veil.

Sometimes the priests would come to the Superior to borrow money of her, when she would show liberality towards some, but others I have heard her blame for not paying what they already owed her. In several instances I knew difficulties to arise from money affairs.

One day I heard a conversation between the Bishop and the Superior of the Seminary about a quantity of plate which an old lady, on her decease, had bequeathed to the church. The Superior wished to appropriate it

to the expenses of the Seminary, but the Bishop claimed it as his own. He said he wanted a set of plate and would have it sent to his house for his own use. The Superior replied that he could do that as soon as he had paid the price which she could get for it at the silversmith's. The Bishop asked her if she knew who she was talking to; and things seemed likely to rise to some height, when I left the room.

I heard a conversation, soon after my admission as a nun, between the Bishop and the Superior of the nunnery, in her room. The Bishop was complaining that he could not get his proper dues from the priests; for, as I understood, each priest is required to pay two English shillings out of every dollar he receives, for his support in the Seminary; while the whole of the profits of every high mass for the dead, is considered the property of the Seminary. The Superior of the nunnery replied, that the priests would be better able to pay all their debts if they did not gamble so much; and the state of the country at that time was unfavourable, and little money was to be had. The Bishop said he must preach a sermon to the people, to make them more liberal in their contributions.

I saw a nun one day whose appearance struck me in a singular manner. She was conducting a priest through the sewing room, and had a large bunch of keys, like an old nun. I could hardly tell what to think when I looked on her. It seemed as if I must have seen her before, and yet I could not remember when or where; and I had an impression that she could not be a nun. For some reason or other which I could not understand, I felt a great anxiety to know something about her, and inquired of Jane Ray, but she could tell me but little or nothing. I then asked leave of the Superior to speak with Sainte Thomas, — for that I understood was her name. She consented, on condition that we should converse in her presence. I accordingly addressed her; but, much to my mortification and sur-

prise, she replied very coldly, and showed at first no disposition to interchange more than a salutation with me. She soon, however, took an opportunity to write something on a bit of paper with a pencil, and to slip it into my hand, which I eagerly read as soon as I could safely do so; and there I found an explanation of her conduct. She intimated that she was unwilling to confide in the Superior, but wished to see me alone the first opportunity.

We soon after had a secret interview, for one night she stole into my bed, and we lay and talked together. She then appeared quite unreserved, and perfectly cordial, and repeated that she believed the Superior was only a spy over us. We soon found that we had been acquaintances in former years, and had been in the Congregational Nunnery together, but after her leaving it, I had met her twice in the street, and heard of her from some one; her family being so wealthy, we had no intercourse in society. She was from a place behind the mountain, where her father, I believe, was a grocer, and a man of wealth. She had an uncle McDonald.

I learnt from her the circumstances under which she entered the nunnery; and they were peculiar. She had not passed a novitiate, but had purchased her admission without such preparation, by the paying of a large sum of money, as she had peculiar reasons for wishing for it.

My restless anxiety was thus in a degree relieved, for I found that my impressions were right, and that St. Thomas was not a nun in the common meaning of the word; but, on the other hand, I found I had been deceived in believing that all admitted into the Convent had to pass through the same long trial and training to which I had been subject.

The state of things in the nunnery cannot be fully understood, without a knowledge of the fact, that much jealousy always exists between some of the nuns, on account of their preferences for particular priests. And yet a priest once told me, that there was more

wrangling done in the Seminary about nuns, than anything else.

Saint Clotilde died while I was there, of a natural death; and I heard one of the other nuns say she was glad of it, because she had drawn off the affections of a priest from her. The priests often bring in little delicacies into the nunnery for their favourites, such as fruit, confectionery, &c., and give them without the Superior's knowledge; and sometimes make them much more valuable presents.

There was a nun who entertained a very bitter spirit towards me. This was Sainte Jane; and a cross, disagreeable creature she was as I ever saw. She would sometimes get close by me on purpose, while employed in ironing, or some other kind of work which required us to be up, and in time of silence stand upon my feet, in order to make me speak and get a penance. She once complained to the Superior, that she saw me looking from a place in the nunnery which she mentioned, and heard the voice of some person speaking with me. Although this was utterly false, the Superior thought I might have some intention of escaping, and sentenced me to the most severe penance I ever endured—viz.: to live on bread and water for three weeks.

This diet appeared to reduced my strength; and I suffered more severely than usual from the kneeling posture at prayers, which was always peculiarly distressing to me, and made me almost desperate, so that I would sometimes almost as readily die as live.

---

## CHAPTER XIX.

MANNERS OF THE CANADIAN PRIEST<sup>1</sup>

THE priests who are natives of Canada, are generally very clownish in their manners, and often quite brutish in their vices. The nuns would sometimes laugh at seeing a Canadian priest from some country parish, coming in with a large piece of bread in his hand, eating it as he walked. A large proportion of the priests are foreigners; and a constant intercourse appears to be kept up with France, as we often heard of such and such a father just arrived from that country. These are decidedly the worst class. Most of the wickedness of which I have any knowledge, I consider as their work.

If I should repeat one half of the stories of wickedness I have heard from the mouths of some of the priests, I am afraid they would hardly be believed; and yet I feel bound, since I have undertaken to make disclosures, not to omit them altogether.

It is not uncommon for priests to recount anecdotes of what they have seen and done; and several stories which I have heard from some of them I will briefly repeat.

A country priest said one day that he knew a priest in a parish better off than those of the Seminary, for he had seven nuns all to himself.

A priest said to me one day that he had three daughters in Montreal, grown up. Their mother was a married woman. One of the daughters, he added, now occasionally confessed to him, ignorant, however, of any relationship.

Another said he was once applied to by a man for advice, in consequence of suspicions he had of his wife, and quieted his suspicions by telling him a falsehood, when he knew the husband was not jealous without cause, he himself having been her seducer.

It may, it must offend the ear of the modest to hear such exposures as these, even if made in the most brief and guarded language that can be used. But I am compelled to declare that this is not all. I shall stop here, but lest my readers should infer that it is because there is nothing more that could be said, I must first make the solemn declaration that there are crimes committed in the Hotel Dieu Nunnery too abominable to mention.

I remember a variety of stories relating to confession, which I have heard told in the nunnery by priests; who sometimes become very communicative when intoxicated. One of their favourite topics is Confession. One of them showed a watch, one day, which he said was worth a hundred dollars. He had received it at confession, from a fellow who had stolen it, telling him that he must see it safely restored to the owner, while his intention was to get it into his possession to keep, which he did, and boasted of what he had done.

I have known priests to sit and talk about what they had done in the Confessional, for three or four hours at a time; and I have heard one give another instructions how he might proceed, and what he might do. One priest, I know, paid another fifty dollars, to tell him what was confessed to him by a young woman for whom he had a partiality, or what he called love. Sometimes one will request another to send a particular lady to confess to him, either on account of her beauty or her property, for considerable sums are in such cases obtained from the rich.

In the country the common practice is, so far as I know, to fix the price of confession for the year, at

some particular rate: as two bushels of wheat out of twelve; or if the person is not a farmer, a sum of money.

A priest one day said to another in my hearing, You confess such a young lady, mentioning her name. She does not like you, I understand, because you kiss her. She is rich, and you have more rich persons to confess than I think is your share.

I knew a country priest, on a wager, drink a shoe-full of wine. I was once near the priests' parlour (as I have called it,) when I heard two of them in an altercation, about the speed of two insects; which led to a wager, on the question whether that insect would move quicker over a hot brick or a cold one. They told me to put a brick in the cold, while they heated one on the stove; and when both were prepared, they actually tried the experiment. This scene caused great excitement and loud talking. I have mentioned it to give an idea of the manner in which much time passes in the nunnery.

One day when I was employed in the hospital, Aunt Susan came in, one of the old nuns, who had been absent for several days, and just returned. The circumstances which I am about to relate were brought to my mind the other day, by reading in Rosamond's book about the priests in Cuba taking her into a monastery in disguise.

Aunt Susan was something like Aunt Margaret, in having something the matter with her feet which made her rather lame. I noticed something strange in her appearance when she came into the hospital, and found that she was unable to apply the cup in cupping a patient for whom that remedy had been prescribed, although she had been remarkably skilful before, and now appeared to try her best. I thought she must have taken too much wine, and undertook to perform the operation at her request, which pleased her so well that she sat down and became very talkative, in a man-

uer little consistent with the rules and practices of the institution.

She told me that she had just returned from Quebec, whither she had gone some days before from our Convent, on a visit to the Hotel Dieu Nunnery, of that city. She had gone in the dress of a priest, in company with some father, and had an opportunity to witness the arrangements and habits of that institution. She went on to make remarks on different subjects which had come under her observation, which I was employed in operating on the patient. She represented the rules in the nunnery which she had visited as less strict, or less strictly regarded, than our own; and said there was much less order, peace, and quietness, than we enjoy. The Superior, she said, had less command over the nuns, and they were less orderly, and not so well contented. She had a cousin there, as she informed me, a Miss Durauceau, who was very stubborn, and unmanageable. If she were Superior, she declared she would half murder her for her rebellious conduct.

All that I knew about the story told by Aunt Susan, was what she told me. I did not see her in the dress of a priest, but I had reason to believe that the nuns often left the convent in such a disguise, and that this part of her tale was by no means incredible. Indeed, during my stay in the Hotel Dieu, I personally knew more than one case of the kind.

There was an old nun, notorious in Montreal, known by the name of Sister Turcot, her family name. I was one day employed in the hospital, when I saw her enter dressed like a priest, in company with one or two fathers. She spent a few minutes there, during which she went up to one of the patient's beds, and performed prayers instead of one, and with such address that I should never have suspected anything irregular. I think, if I had not known her appearance as well as I did. It was with the greatest difficulty that I refrained from laughing at a sight so ludicrous. She was at the

time on her way out of the nunnery, in company with the priests, and after a short delay left the hospital, and went, as I supposed, into the street.

But I had still stronger evidence than this of the departure of nuns in open daylight, in the dress of priests; for I was repeatedly called in to help them to put on their disguise. I have dressed the nun *Sainte Felix*, three or four times; and a hateful creature she was in consequence of her jealous disposition. She was always thinking some one else a greater favourite than herself, with some priest.

The place where the change of dress was usually made was the Superior's room; and in the closet in the adjoining passage, at the end nearest the door, were always kept a number of priests' dresses, nearly a shelf full; as well as several black-hooded cloaks, like these worn by the Sisters of Charity.

A priest once told me that he had three nuns to take out of the Convent that day, and was troubled to know how to do it. He had often taken out one at a time, and had sometimes thought he might lose them if they were disposed to run away. He commonly directed them to limp as they passed along the street;—“for,” said he, “many of the priests do so, and they might pass very well for limping priests; and in our dress, how can you tell a man from a woman? But,” he added, “now I have got three; and if I should undertake to lead them all out together, the devils of women might start off three different ways at the first corner we come to, and how could I catch them?”

The change made in the dress, when a nun disguises herself as a priest, is complete. All the clothes of the latter are assumed. They pass through the public rooms in going out of the nunnery, and are often absent for several weeks.

**CENTRAL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY**  
**University of California, San Diego**

..... - DATE DUE

APR 17 1980

APR 13 1980

APR 22 1980

MAY 22 1980

MAY 05 1980

University of California  
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY  
405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1388  
Return this material to the library  
from which it was borrowed.

---

8 - 2

---

9 - 14 - 93

**DUE**

14/19/1993

SRLF CHARGE

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



**A** 000 785 086 0

U